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THE WEAVER OF THE FROST





*Thousands o' birds are singing in my tree,
Only one bird sings in my dream.*

The WEAVER *of the* FROST

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CHILDREN'S ROOM

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JUN 18
YRABEL OLSEN

Dedicated to
MABLE HOLMES PARSONS
Mother of my Dreams
and her sisters
DORIS SMITH ELINOR PILLSBURY



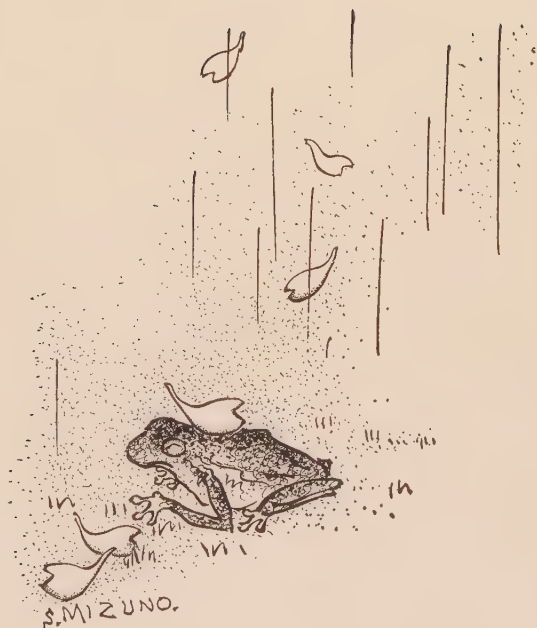
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THE WEAVER OF THE FROST



THE WEAVER OF THE FROST

THE RE was great sorrow among the weavers of the moon halo, because Princess Miya, the chief weaver, was about to be banished from Moonland. Princess Miya was the most beautiful and most beloved of all the weavers, and therefore this disgrace of hers meant as much sorrow to her friends as it did to the Princess herself. Moreover, the punishment had come in such a way that anyone with an understanding heart could not help sympathizing with her. You, too, would feel sorry for her, if you knew how she had come to break the King's law. It had happened in this way.

One night the Princess was trying out her pet rabbit on the sea. Rabbits are the horses in Moonland; as we all know, they are such swift runners that they can go upon the sea without sinking. You have seen them many times hopping from wave top to wave top, though, perhaps, you might have thought they were the white caps of the waves.

One night the Princess was riding on this rabbit, when she caught sight of some green insects which were watching the moon from the shore. They looked somewhat like grasshoppers, but were smaller in body, longer of wing, and a thousand times more beautiful. "We are the spinners of Insectland," said they when the Princess had asked who they were. "We gather threads from the heart of the grass, and give them to the makers of webs and cocoons."

The Princess became very much interested, because she, too, had spinners like these in her Moonland. She stepped down from her rabbit and had a long talk with them. She asked them how they gathered the thread, and how this thread was made into cocoons; and, in turn, she told them about the spinners and the golden loom of Moonland.

"Perhaps some of you have heard about this golden loom of Moonland," she said. "It is a beautiful thing. It stands higher than the tallest tree on earth, and is so wide that it will take you one whole day to walk from one end of it to the other. True to its name, it is made of solid gold, and is decorated with all kinds of carvings and jewels. The weavers are very proud of their loom, and always keep it clean and well polished, so that, when sunlight falls upon it, it brightens all Moonland."

This story of the golden loom, and the insects which collect thread for it, made the spinners so curious that they wanted to go and see Moonland. Some of them, however, were old enough to know that they were too humble creatures to ask such a favor, and some were afraid to go up so high in the sky. But Izpot, the most beloved son of Insectland, whose wings were like young bamboo leaves, and whose ruby eyes were flecked with moonbeams, was too young to be very thoughtful, and too brave to be afraid. When the Princess was about to leave, he hid himself in one of her sleeves, and was carried by her to Moonland.

That was the beginning of the trouble. There is a law

in Moonland which forbids any outsider to enter its gates without special permission from the King, and anyone who breaks this law is sent to prison for life.

Naturally, when the Princess discovered Izpot in her sleeve, she was terrified. If she had been less kind-hearted, she might have been angry, and taken Izpot straight to the court. But she was as kind as the kindest mother you ever knew, and could not think of sending him to prison, there to stay for the rest of his life. After long thinking she decided that she would send him back to his people. So, she kept him hidden in the corner of her sleeve; and then one night, when no one was looking, she sent him down by a long thread.

This was the act for which she now must be banished from her home; and knowing it, her friends were all full of sympathy. They gathered around the golden loom, and asked one another if there was no way to save her from the disgrace.

In the meantime, the gates of the King's palace were opened, and the Princess came out guarded by a few officials, who seemed to be as sad as the Princess. The weavers ran to her, and asked her what she was going to do on the earth, and if there was any hope of her ever coming back to Moonland.

"I am going down to weave frost for the Woman of the North," she said. "My task begins at the fall of leaves, and ends at the coming of snow. I do not know whether I shall ever be permitted to come back, but the King said that if I neglected my task even for a single day, I

should lose my right to be pardoned. That means, if I do my work well, I may yet be allowed to return. I am very sorry that I must part from you. I hope you will be very kind to one another, and think of me once in a while."

And then she climbed down the ladder of moonbeams, and came to the earth.

On the earth, she was received by the spinners of Insect-land, who were sorry that one of them had caused her so much trouble, and were anxious to know if there was anything they could do for her. As for Izpot, himself, his heart was torn with pity and remorse. "Please tell me," he cried. "Is there anything I can do to help you? I would die a thousand times to make amends for what I have done."

Of course there was nothing they could do for her. They were small and powerless.

"Thank you, little friends," replied the Princess. "I do not think there is anything you can do for me. You can help me best by being kind to one another. Do not be too hard on Izpot, for he has suffered enough." And she left them for the home of the Woman of the North.

The Woman of the North was uglier than the ugliest woman you can think of. She was lean, and hump-backed, and had a head like a worn floor-mop. Her long beak nose was crooked, and pock-marked, and a long, cracked eyetooth hung down from her quivering gray lips. Her black-rimmed eyes were so deeply sunk and so narrow that no one could look into them, and her speech

was like the jabbering of a woodchuck. Her clothes were like a discarded coal-sack, and she lived in a squalid old cave, treading upon the pedals of a squeaky spinning wheel. Oh, yes, she was a horrible looking creature.

But her heart was even uglier and meaner than her face. She growled and spluttered when the Princess asked for yarns, because it meant more work for her. "You speak as if I hadn't enough to do," she grumbled. "Don't sit down. That cushion isn't for you."

She hobbled to her closet, pulled out a few bundles of tangled, dirty yarns, and flung them at the Princess. "Take this and go, and no talk."

The Princess examined the thread. There were enough yarns to last only thirteen days, while she must weave frost for fifteen days. The Princess asked the woman to give her some more.

"No talk, I said," roared the woman. "Go, you fussy little fool."

"But this will last only thirteen days. Don't you think you should give me some more?"

"That's enough. Now get out, or I will take the thread away from you." She hobbled back to her wheel and began to pedal.

"You are very unkind," said the Princess. "If I ever go back to Moonland, I will tell the King how you treated me."

"Yes," she jeered, showing her purple gums. "If you ever go back. But you will never go back, because you can't make fifteen days' frost out of this thread, and if you

can't, you will lose the right to be pardoned. Ha, ha, ha! 'If I ever go back!' "

The Princess carried the yarns to the loom, which was made of wood and was so old and warped that it seemed hardly usable. She untangled the thread, washed it clean, and wove it into frost, using as little thread as she could. Because she had used so little thread, the frost was pitifully thin, and melted almost before sunrise. This made the Princess very unhappy, and, hiding herself in the woods, she cried all of the day.

For ten nights thereafter the Princess worked, weaving frost and spreading it over the field. Then, counting the remaining yarns, she discovered that she had enough for only four more days. In horror, she ran to the Woman of the North, and asked for one more day's supply of yarn.

The woman was meaner than ever. "If you haven't any thread for the fifteenth day," she said, "you just sit down, and take a rest."

"But, I can't! I must have frost for every one of the fifteen days, because, if I miss even a single morning, I shall never be forgiven, and must stay here forever."

"That's good. Miss it, then, and we shall have fine times together. Out with you!" She drove her out with her crooked staff.

Discouraged, the Princess stumbled back to her loom, and began to cry.

Suddenly she heard someone calling her: "Princess, Princess, what is the trouble? Can't we do something? Can't we help?"



The Princess weaves the yarns into frost.

It was Izpot. "I thought I would come and see you once more before I go to my winter sleep," he said, shaking the dust from his wings. "You seem to be in great trouble. I should like very much to know if there is anything I can do."

The Princess thought for a moment. Suddenly she clapped her hands. "Yes, yes!" she cried. "I forgot all about it. There is a thing you can do—only *you* can do."

"Is there?" cried Izpot. "Tell me—I would die to help you."

"You say you get thread for your weavers. Can you give some of your thread to me? I need it very much." And she told him of her trouble.

And, oh, how happy Izpot was! Here was at last the chance to repay the Princess. He jumped up with a cry and danced around. "That is the easiest thing in the world to do," he said. "I will go straight back and get it for you. We have no thread in stock, because we were getting ready for the winter sleep; but we can get it from the grass in no time. Good-by, Princess, I will see you later."

Down the mountain, and through the forest he ran. Reaching his home, he called out all his people and set them to work.

In two minutes the field became alive with the spinners. Thousands and thousands of the green insects wallowed into the forest of grass, and hewed down the stalks right and left, splitting them afterwards, and drawing thread out of them. There was not a single spinner, however

old or young, that did not come out to help. Many worked so earnestly that they forgot to eat or sleep.

This continued for three days, at the end of which they had gathered more than enough to make the frost for one day. "Enough!" cried Izpot. "Now, let's take this to the Princess."

Soon an army of the spinners, bearing the thread in small bundles, poured out of the field and raced toward the mountain. Reaching the loom, they unloaded themselves, and watched the Princess spin the thread into yarns, and weave the yarns into frost. Afterwards, they helped her spread the frost on the field.

Thus the frost for the fifteenth day was made. And it was marvelous frost! It was like snow in whiteness, but more delicate in texture, and there were many beautiful patterns not found in any other frost. It sparkled in the sunlight like the diamond veil of the fairy queen.

The King of Moonland, seeing this frost, was very much pleased. "She is a wonderful girl," he said to his Queen. "Instead of neglecting her work in her sorrow and loneliness, she kept at her work every morning, and now has brought out such a wonderful frost—she must be pardoned. Not only that—she must be rewarded. I will make her the Queen of the Evening Star."

So, the next full moon night a rabbit came across the golden trail over the sea to take her home. The spinners made a great occasion of her departure; and, as she started toward her home, they lined themselves up on the beach, and waved their whiskers as hard as they could.

THE BLOSSOM MAKERS

THIS happened in Yoshino at the time the souls of trees could come out into the open once in a while and visit one another or play with birds and butterflies.

Yoshino was then known as the Cherry Forest because it was filled with numerous cherry trees. These trees were all beautiful, for the King of the forest was very strict, and he cut down every tree that showed a sign of neglect. But Akebono, or Dawn, and Yoube, or Evening, were more beautiful than any others. Akebono was really more beautiful than Yoube because her boughs were more graceful and her blossoms fresher and lovelier in color. But the tree souls said that the two were equally beautiful, for the soul of Yoube had a gentle and kindly heart and she spent much time in helping others.

One day late in summer, the souls of Akebono and Yoube were discussing how they should spend their time of rest. They had no more work to do that year, as they had already made their blossoms and leaves, and they were wondering whether they should go down to the core of the Earth and visit with the soul of water, or go up to the Moonland and play with the weavers of frost.

Akebono and Yoube always did and planned things together because they loved each other very much. Of course, they loved others, too, but the love they had for each other was greater than that they held for others. One could tell that by the way they hurried toward each other

at the end of every summer. Their trees stood at opposite corners of the forest, so that while they were making blossoms and leaves they could not see each other. Consequently, they were quite lonely during these two seasons, and they would hasten to each other as soon as their work time was over.

So on that day these two friends were discussing how they should spend their rest time.

By and by Akebono clapped her hands and said that she had a good idea. "Let us play apart this year," she said. "You, for instance, go to the Moonland, and I will go to the core of the Earth. Then, when we meet again, we shall have many things to talk about."

At first Yoube did not like this idea, because she wanted to be with Akebono every moment of the time she had. But Akebono insisted, and finally, she agreed to do it that way.

So Akebono went down to visit the soul of water while Yoube went up to the Moonland.

Early the following winter Yoube came back to Yoshino. The frost weavers in the Moonland had told her that her vacation was not half over and that she should stay a little longer. But she wanted to save time to play with Akebono, and so she came home.

Yoshino was a lonely place, because most of the tree souls were away. Yoube went to the souls who were still there and asked if Akebono had returned.

"I have not seen her yet," said one of them. "I suppose she is having too wonderful a time to come back."

"Yes," said another, "she is having a wonderful time. I went to the fountain a little while ago, and I could hear the sound of her laugh."

Yoube went to the fountain and listened. And, sure enough, she could hear the bubble of Akebono's laughter coming from way under the Earth.

Yoube was disappointed, but at the same time she was glad that Akebono was having such a pleasant time. "The vacation is not over yet," she said. "I shall clean up our trees and wait."

So she trimmed the boughs and polished the barks of Akebono's tree and her own, and then, going to the fountain every once in a while she listened to see if her friend was still playing with the soul of water. And every time she so listened she heard the bubbling note of Akebono's laugh.

In the meantime the long vacation came to an end. The tree souls returned to the forest one after another, and began to gather thread for the next year's blossoms. This gathering of thread must be done before the Snow Man laid his blanket over the Earth, and the tree souls worked as hard as they could.

Still Akebono did not return, and there was a bubbling note in the fountain.

Yoube was alarmed. "Why does she not come home?" she cried to herself. "Why do they not send her back?"

She went to her friend's tree and to the fountain hundreds of times a day, and prayed that Akebono would return before it was too late. Once or twice, out of

despair, she dipped her face in the fountain and called for Akebono to come back. But, of course, Akebono could not hear her, and she stayed on.

At last the time had come for the tree souls to stop thread collecting. The Snow Man began to spread his blanket, unrolling it from the hilltop down to the valley. The Ice Man, too, had come, and started to put diamond fringes on the trees and to seal the fountain.

Still there was no sign of Akebono.

Yoube did not know what to do. She wanted to go down to the core of the Earth and bring back Akebono. But, at the same time, she knew that if she went she would not be able to return in time to weave her blossoms. And if she did not weave her blossoms, the King would cut her tree, and she would have to roam in the woods like a ghost. So she walked back and forth between Akebono's tree and her own, crying, "Oh, why doesn't she come?"

Soon it was time for the tree souls to weave their blossoms. They must now shut themselves in their trees and work. Most of the souls were already inside the trees, and the rest were going in, each determined to make the most beautiful blossoms in the forest.

Yoube stayed out as long as she dared, still waiting for the return of her friend. Then, when she could wait no longer, she took her thread, bade good-by to her tree, and went into the tree of Akebono. There she began to weave the blossoms for her friend so that her friend need not lose her tree. That, of course, meant that she must lose

her own, because, as I said before, the King was very strict and he cut down every tree that showed a mark of neglect. And the thought of the day when her tree would be cut, and she be driven out to roam about like a ghost, sometimes terrified her. But then, it was better, she thought, than to see her friend become homeless. She was going to make as beautiful blossoms as she could, and then return to her tree and receive her punishment. She was not sure whether she would be able to make Akebono accept the blossoms. Probably not, because Akebono loved her as much as she loved Akebono; but, under the circumstances, that seemed to be the only thing to do. So she worked on.

In a few days the King came to seal the trees. After they were sealed, the souls must stay there and never come out until they had finished their blossoms, because the King wanted each tree soul to work out her blossoms without any help. Up to that time they had been allowed to exchange visits or to borrow thread from one another, and so Yoube had opportunity to go out and look for her friend. But now she must stay and finish her blossoms.

While Yoube was struggling so to save her friend's tree, the Snow Man's blanket gradually rolled away, the crystal fringes dropped from the trees, and the grasses began to show their heads and smile in the sun. Then from atop the misty hill came the voice of a nightingale, calling for all the tree souls to come out and hang their blossoms.

So, one night, when there were no other tree souls out

to watch her, Yoube slipped out of Akebono's tree, quickly hung her blossoms, and hurried away. Then slowly she went back to her own tree.

Up to that time she had been too busy with her work to think much about the punishment she must receive. But now that the work was over, the dread of the shame and pain she must suffer overwhelmed her. Comforting herself with the thought that Akebono was safe and that she could go on making blossoms and delighting the world for many years to come, she walked on till she came in sight of her tree.

At first, she could not bear to look. She stood there a long, long time with her eyes downcast, thinking what wonderful blossoms she would have made for it if Akebono had come back. But, finally gathering her strength, she glanced up at the tree. She glanced up, and then gasped in surprise. For its trunk was beautifully polished, and its boughs were covered with the loveliest blossoms she had ever seen! It shimmered in the moonlight like a huge mound of snow.

She rubbed her eyes, and stared on, wondering if she were not dreaming.

"Do you like it, Yoube?" someone spoke from behind. "Do you think it is good enough?"

Yoube whirled with a cry, and there she saw the smiling face of Akebono!

"Oh, Akebono!" she cried half in tears and half in laughter. "You are back! You are back!"

"I came back just before the King sealed the trees,"

said Akebono. "I heard what you were doing for me, and so I borrowed some thread from my friends and made these blossoms. I am sorry that I gave you so much trouble. After this I shall never go anywhere without you. Will you forgive me?"

And when the day of inspection came, the King was very proud of Akebono and Yoube. "These blossoms are not only beautiful," he said, "but they express two of the best virtues we can ever have, because in the blossoms of Akebono I see great love, while in the ones of Yoube I see deep gratitude."

THE MOON BIRD

IT was shortly before my mother and I left our dear old home. After half a day of silent, heavy-hearted packing, we went to rest by the window facing our garden. There had been a long, severe snowstorm, and several unfamiliar birds, driven out of their mountain retreats by the rigor of the weather, were pecking at the slices of squash we had scattered for them. We watched these birds awhile, then turned our gaze toward our favorite cherry tree, which stood in the center of our garden, spreading its ice-glazed boughs over the snow.

This tree had been with us longer than any other tree in the garden. It was the most beautiful tree in our neighborhood—large and graceful, bearing thick clusters of huge, rose-colored blossoms which turned it into a glorious mass of sunset cloud. We loved it because of that, but we loved it most as the favorite singing place of our moon bird.

We did not know the real name of this wonderful bird. We called him moon bird because he often sang in the moonlight. He was a marvelous singer, and his song always brought to us the vision of the sunshine and dancing blossoms. A poet tells me that there was a flower that opened once in a thousand years, and so beautiful was it that when it fell, men were in mourning for a hundred days. The moon bird's song always made us think of that flower. It was so full of joy and loveliness that each day without it seemed like a long, dark night to us.

This bird was a shy creature, and he always sang hidden in the depths of the blossoms, so that our efforts to catch a glimpse of him were fruitless. But we pictured him to be as perfect in appearance as he was in singing—an exquisitely shaped little bird, bearing the snow of cherry blossoms on his back, the rose of dawn on his breast, the green of young leaves on his wings, and in his eyes the gold of moonbeams.

The moon bird came with the blossoms and departed with them. That meant that we could have him only five days in a year. And those five days were, oh, so precious! We used to lock our gates, spread our blankets under the cherry tree, and spend those days alone with the blossoms and moon bird.

We wrote many poems at such times. Mother, who loved the bird better than any of us, once composed these verses:

Thousands o' birds are singing in my tree
Only one bird sings in my dream.
Deny me the joy of summer field,—
The broken rainbow 'neath the veil of dew;
Deny me the glory of autumn woods,—
The golden pillars in the maples' burning sea;
Deny me the peace of winter night,—
The homes asleep on the moonlit plain of snow;
But give me, O give me, another moment with our blossoms
and our moon bird!

The cherry tree, as I said before, was the customary singing place of this wonder bird; and, as we gazed at

it, the thought of the spring nights when there would be no blossoms and no moon bird weighed upon our hearts like a dark intolerable cloud.

At this time something swooped down from mid-sky and hurled itself upon the tiny birds. It was a large hawk, out to feed on the little birds.

There were terrified cries. A dozen small birds fluttered aside and scattered in all directions. One, confused, flew straight up. The hawk followed him and struck. The bird shrieked, turned a few times in the air, then dropping down, sank into the snow. The hawk flew down after him, and missing him, wheeled about to strike again.

Instinctively I rushed out to the little bird and snatched him from the claws of the charging hawk. He was a dull little fellow, resembling a sparrow in general appearance, only a size larger. His injury was not serious, only a claw mark on his left shoulder, but he was almost dead from fright. We took him to the fire and warmed him.

In a little while he grew stronger and began to beat his wings, drawing blood from his wound. We put a salve on the wound and bandaged him in such a way that he could not use his wings. Then we gave him some grain and a piece of squash.

At first he refused to eat; but later, hunger getting the better of his fear, he ate greedily.

We borrowed an old cage from a neighbor, and put him into it. We really did not want to do that, but we

had a very mischievous kitten, and we were too busy to watch out for the bird.

So it was that the little brown bird came into our lives. Every morning we filled his food cup, changed his water, and, raising the bandage, observed how his wound was healing.

Finally came the day of moving. The helpers arrived while we were still in bed, and began to tear up the house. Moving men came later and started to load. We flew from place to place, directing the men, taking down the forgotten hangings, indicating the boxes of breakable things.

At last the wagons pulled away and a 'rickshaw came to take us to our new home. Then, all at once, the sorrow of separation, forgotten during the busy hours, smote us. Silently we wandered about the house which had been the scene of so much happiness, then went out to take a last long look at our garden.

The garden was a lonely place, though the sun was bright and sparrows were chirping among the ruby clusters of the winter berry. Everything there seemed to know it was the last time we could be with them. The fountain where we used to watch the break of moonbeams, the bamboo trees to which we had tied the colored tags of poetry for the Princes of the Starland, the locust bushes where the insects tinkled their bells or clip-clopped their shuttles all summer long—all seemed to be full of sorrow. And as for our cherry tree, it seemed to stretch its arms and beg to be taken with us. I turned to

ask mother if the new master of the house would be as kind to our garden and if the moon bird would know that we were no longer there. But there was something in her eyes that choked me. I clung to her and hid my face on her breast.

So we left our dear home and moved into a dingy, two-story house that stood in a cheap quarter of the city.

I shall not try to tell you what a miserable place it was—no trees, no hedges, only a mean yard at the back, and, in front, a muddy street of ugly houses and uglier people. Nor will I tell you how our hearts ached for the sparkling green of the bamboo trees and the insect-singing locust bushes. Even our kitten seemed to yearn for the old home. He was not so gay as he used to be. Every now and then he would look up as if to ask how soon we were going home.

Only the little bird did not seem to mind the change. He ate and drank and hopped about in his cage, growing stronger and fatter every day, and seeming to think that there was nothing wrong with the world.

As time passed, he grew bolder and more mischievous. He would bite our fingers when we tried to change his bandage. He would refuse to bathe when the tub was ready and papers spread; then would take a dip in his drinking cup, spreading water over everything. Constantly he would peck and tug at his bandage; and often, succeeding in working himself free, he would raise a shrill cry of triumph. Sometimes, though, he got tangled up so badly that he had to call for help. Then, too, he

often woke us at night with his chirping. This occurred when the moon was bright, and the chirping had a haunting likeness to the song of the moon bird. Of course it was a mere chirping, and there was nothing in it to compare with the melody of that wonder bird. But the fact that he sang at night, along with this vague likeness of tone, made us wonder if he were not in some way related to the moon bird.

But moon bird or star bird, he was a lively little creature, and he recovered his health in an amazingly short time. By the time snow melted and young grasses began to push out their heads among the tangle of the old ones, he was able to use his wings for hours at a time.

At last we decided that the time had come to send him away. So one sunny morning, after giving him the sort of food he liked best, we carried his cage to the window. "Now he is going, Meechan," mother said to me. "Would you not like to say something to him?"

I looked at the bird, who was pecking at mother's finger, and tried to speak. But I could not, because tears were coming to my eyes. "You say it, mother," I said. "I—I can't."

Mother, too, seemed unable to speak. She fumbled at the door of the cage for a long, long time. Then, with a broken, "Sayonara, little bird. Fly home and do not let the hawk catch you again," she opened the door.

The bird hesitated awhile. He hopped about in the cage, tilting his head from one side to another as if won-

dering whether he should go or not. Then, coming out, he perched on the back of mother's hand.

Mother gently shook her hand and he spread his wings. He flew up into the sunshine, and went straight away to the hill in the west.

When he had become a speck in the sky and finally was lost to our view, mother put her arm around me and said, "I wonder, Meechan, if he will ever remember us?"

I bit my quivering lip and ran blindly to my room.

This, we thought, would be the end of the brown bird in our lives. But, no, that was not to be. In the afternoon of that very day a terrific blizzard broke and raged for several days. And one evening he came back, his feathers frosted and his tiny body quaking. Accustomed to the warmth indoors, he had not been able to endure the wild fury of the storm without.

We carried him to the fire and tried to warm him. We brought some seed and tried to make him take it. Then, seeing that he was too weak to eat, we poured a few drops of pepper water down his throat.

But these efforts were of no avail. He lay shivering in my hand, reaching out now and then to peck at my finger as if to show that he knew perfectly well I was there. Finally his head dropped. His body grew still.

We buried him in the yard and marked his resting place with a young cherry tree.

Soon it was spring. Shimmering veils of mist draped the hills and buds were swelling on the boughs. In the far roof of heaven larks were singing of the things they

saw in the stars. And on the streets people were wondering which hills would be the first to burst into bloom. The whole world was gay with songs and laughter and sunshine.

But winter still lingered in our home. It even seemed to grow darker and colder. The memory of the beautiful home we had lost, and of the little brown bird we had sent to his death, lay like ice upon our hearts. Then, to make matters worse, mother took to bed with cold and grew weaker. Gradually her cheeks hollowed and blue rings formed around her eyes. After a time she became delirious, and talked in a manner that frightened me.

Then a terrible thing happened. A brooding spell settled upon her one evening and could not be broken. In vain I talked and laughed and played merry tunes on my harp. Mother did not hear me—she did not even seem to know that I was there. Silently she stared at the moonlight on the paper door, her eyes wild and her lips quivering with words I could not hear.

This continued all through the evening; and when I, thoroughly frightened, would have gone to the doctor, she suddenly flung off her bedclothes and struggled to her feet.

“Where are you going, mother?” I asked.

Mother turned with a start, as if she were surprised to find me there. “Why, Meechan!” she cried. “What are you doing here? Why are you not at home?”

“Mother!” I cried in terror. “What are you saying? This is our home. Can you not see it?”

Mother laughed, a thin, dry laugh. "Yes, yes, this is our home. Ha, ha, ha! you are a funny child, Meechan, a very funny child. But, come, let us go home. We have no time to waste on jokes, for they are waiting for us." And she staggered toward the window.

"Who are waiting for us, mother?" I asked, following her. We were on the second floor, and if mother should fall out of the window it would be her death.

"Who are waiting!" mother sniffed. "Why, your father and the blossoms and the moon bird, of course. Hurry, Meechan, we must go."

I gasped in horror. Holding her back by the sleeve, I begged her to calm herself and return to her bed.

Mother shook off my hands and, staggering to the window, threw it open. She gazed a while at the western hill, above which a full moon hung like a yellow lantern. "Hark! Hark!" she cried. "He is calling now—the moon bird is calling. He says the blossoms are falling fast and he cannot remain much longer. We must hurry. Meechan! Meechan! Where are you? Come and get ready. See there—see that?" She pointed her thin finger toward the hill. "See that rosy splash over all the sky? Those are our blossoms. And they are falling. Are they not wonderful? Just like the snow in the sunset glow.

"Snow—snow—" she muttered meditatively, "the warm snow of the spring on the ground of shifting shadows."

Then she began to recite a poem she had written a few



O spare me another age with my moon bird.

years before, jumbling its words so badly, however, that it did not give any meaning:

Deny me the joy of summer pools [she said];

The beauty of the diamond city in the burning sea, the
burning sea.—

But spare me, O spare me another age with my moon bird.

“There!” She clapped her hands. “Now I have it—
my masterpiece.”

She laughed and began to climb the window sill.

“Be careful, mother!” I cried, clinging to her girdle.
“You may fall out and hurt yourself.”

But I could not hold her back, because I was so little, and, besides, the girdle became untied. “I am coming!” she cried, and slowly pulled herself up on the sill.

At this moment, a sound as high and clear as the top note of a silver flute burst on the air.

I caught my breath, for it was the voice of our moon bird. And as I listened, it rose again, breaking into the song so dear to our hearts.

Mother, too, seemed to have heard it, because she paused halfway up to the sill, listening.

I went to the window and looked out. The bird was singing on a far branch of the cherry tree we had planted in memory of our little brown bird; and strange to say, although he was far from us and the moonlight was dim, I could see him as if he were on the palm of my hand. And he was the color of a sparrow and there was the old scar on his left shoulder!

And the song went on, serenely and sweetly, bringing

to me the joy of sunshine and dancing blossoms. As I listened, there rose before my eyes a tree of massive trunk and far-flung boughs, showering its rose-colored blossoms over the mossy garden of fantastic shadows and the moon-breaking fountains.

Even the gloomy house itself seemed to turn into the spacious home of green mattings and dainty cushions. And this vision of our old home, so painful a moment before, now gave me only happiness. Somehow, through the magic of the bird song, the rose of memory had lost its thorns and bore only the color and fragrance of its flower.

In a little while the song died away, the bird melted into the moonbeams, and we were alone with the night.

There was a sound of sobbing. Mother crumpled to the floor and began to cry. I dropped on my knees and put my hand on her back.

By and by she sat up and took me in her arms. "Meechan," she said, "I am afraid I gave you much trouble. But I will get well in a short time because that bird song has given me a new strength."



*And the song went on bringing the joy
of sunshine and dancing blossoms.*

THE BAMBOO PRINCESS

THE most beautiful legend ever told in Japan is the one that explains the origin of the name Fuji Yama.

Fuji Yama, as we all know, is the greatest mountain in that country. It is so high that the snow on its crest never melts, and so big that its skirt spreads into three states. Towering there on the pine-dotted coast of Suma, it seems like a huge, white-capped triangular wave of purplish blue.

Many stories are told as to the origin of the name of this great mountain. One says that the term Fuji means "No Two," and that the mountain is so called because there is no other mountain to compare with it. According to the legend I am about to tell, however, the word means "No Death," and it was given to this mountain because of the following beautiful incident.

Once upon a time there lived an old bamboo cutter. He was a kindly old man, and he spent much of his time in helping others.

One day he was working in a bamboo forest, when he saw a large bamboo tree made of pure gold. Mystified, he cut it down, and was surprised to find in it a tiny girl, who was about three inches high and was more beautiful than any girl he had ever seen.

The bamboo cutter was much pleased, because he had no child of his own. He carried her home, named her Kaguya Hime, or the Princess who Shines in the Night,

because she had eyes that shimmered like stars, and he placed her in a small box.

Every day after that he found a bamboo tree of pure gold, and by selling those trees at good prices he became very rich.

Kaguya Hime grew up with surprising rapidity, and in a course of three months she became as tall as the bamboo cutter. And she was so beautiful that those who beheld her wondered if she were not the soul of some great cherry tree come to gladden the hearts of men.

In a few months the fame of her beauty spread over the length and breadth of Japan, and many men of high rank and great wealth came to seek her hand. According to the custom of the day, these men grouped themselves around her home and recited poems expressing their great love for her.

Kaguya Hime listened to those poems with great interest, but showed no sign of falling in love with any of the men. The men were very much disappointed, and asked the bamboo cutter if he would not help them.

The bamboo cutter, thereupon, called Kaguya Hime and asked her to select the man she liked best and marry him, so that he would be assured of her happiness.

Kaguya Hime gave much thought to this matter, and then one day she called together five of the men who had come to court her. "Love is measured by the amount of sacrifice one makes for it," she told them. "I will give each of you a hard task to perform. Anyone who has done well the task assigned to him shall have my hand."

To the first of the men she gave the task of bringing the stone bowl which had been used by the Buddha. This bowl was said to be treasured in a temple in China, and was known to shine in the night.

To the second man she gave the task of bringing a branch from the sacred tree of Mount Horai, which was said to have the roots of silver and the trunk of gold, and to bear fruits of white jewels.

The third man was assigned the duty of securing the skin of the fire rat, which was reputed to be immune to fire.

The work given to the fourth man was that of capturing the jewel on the throat of the Dragon; while the one given to the fifth was that of finding the tiny cowry that swallows were said to lay now and then.

So the lovers scattered away to bring back the treasures asked by Kaguya Hime.

After three years the first man returned. He told Kaguya Hime that he had been to China, but, in reality, he had been hiding in a temple in Yamato because he was afraid of the sea. He brought a beautiful stone bowl, placed in a costly brocaded bag, and he hung it from a branch of a cherry tree.

Kaguya Hime carried the bowl into a dark place to see if it had a light of its own. To her disappointment, she discovered that it had not enough light to rival even a tiny firefly.

The second man happened to be a better liar than the first. He rowed out with every show of going to Mount

Horai; then, secretly coming back three days later, made a golden branch of jewel fruits with the assistance of several craftsmen. Then, taking the branch to Kaguya Hime, he tried to win her love with the following story.

"I sailed away," he said, "not to find this tree, but to die, because I did not think that such a tree could be found, and, consequently, I had no hope of ever winning you. And it is better to die than to live without you.

"As so I sailed away and wandered aimlessly," he continued, "I lost my course and was carried into a strange sea. There I struck a terrific storm, and was attacked by angry waves and ghostly figures that rose from the depths to drag me down. For five hundred days my ship floundered, and in that time, having exhausted the food supply, I was compelled to live on seaweed and shells.

"But at the hour of the Dragon, on the five-hundredth day, I saw a beautiful mountain floating in the distance. I rowed toward it and there found a number of heavenly women dipping water with silver kettles.

"I stepped on to the island, and went toward a steep mountain towering from the heart of it. It was a beautiful mountain, covered with strange trees and flowers, and shimmering with streams of molten gold and silver and emerald. These streams were spanned with jeweled bridges, and over these bridges heavenly women were singing and dancing.

"The people on that island were very glad to see me, and they entertained me with most wonderful music and dancing. They were the most beautiful and the kindest

people I have ever known, and I was strongly tempted to stay with them forever. But I came back because you were waiting for me. I took a branch from that sacred tree and left the island. I reached here after three hundred days of sailing."

And he showed the golden branch hung with jewel fruits.

Kaguya Hime was deeply touched by this story of the suffering he had endured for her sake, and she decided to reward him by becoming his wife.

But at that moment a number of men rushed into her garden and demanded to see the second lover. They were the craftsmen who had helped the lover make the golden branch, and had come to demand pay for their work.

The lover flew into a rage and punished the craftsmen with severe beatings. Then, ashamed of his own deceitfulness, he ran into the mountains and was seen no more.

The skin of a fire rat brought by the third lover was a beautiful thing, encased in a jeweled box and shimmering in golden green. But, when exposed to flame, it burned like a piece of oiled paper.

The fourth lover, as we remember, went in quest of the jewel on the throat of the King Dragon. He armed himself with a powerful bow and arrows, and rowing out to mid-ocean, started to hunt for the Dragon.

The King Dragon chuckled in the depths of his cavern. He slapped his tail a few times, churning up great waves around the ship of the fourth lover.

The lover was terrified. He dropped on his knees, and

prayed to the King Dragon to spare him, because he would never again try to hunt for him.

The King Dragon waited until the lover prayed one thousand times; then he allowed him to go unharmed.

The lover hurried ashore and went home. Because he had been blown by the gale, he was swollen like a lantern fish and there were two great, plum-colored lumps under his eyes.

Reaching home, he called all his people together and spoke thus: "The King Dragon is as powerful as the thunder god. I was punished severely for merely trying to capture him. If I had really caught him, there is no knowing what would have become of me. That big robber, Kaguya Hime, she would rob me of my life! I will not see her again. I will not even go near her house!"

And because he carried the huge plum-colored lumps under his eyes, the people said that instead of the Dragon's jewel, he had brought back two plum-colored jewels of his own.

The duty of the fifth lover was to get the cowry in the nest of a swallow. So he went to a wise man and asked what would be the best time to find the treasure.

The wise man said: "When a swallow is about to lay a cowry, it raises its tail and flies in a circle seven times. Feel in its nest after it has flown in such manner and you will find the cowry."

So the lover had a large basket hung near a swallow's nest and watched the swallow day and night.

One day, seeing the bird raise its tail, circle seven times, then fly into the nest, he went up the chimney in the basket and pushed his hand into the nest. Grasping something hard and smooth, he cried, "I have it!"

His retainers, thereupon, started to bring him down. The rope holding the basket suddenly snapped and the lover fell down, sticking his head into the fireplace below.

That stunned him for a few moments, but he was happy and he smiled even while unconscious. As soon as he was revived with a dash of cold water on his cinder-blackened face, he jumped up and shouted: "Kaguya Hime is mine! I have the cowry!" And he opened his hand only to find a piece of dirt.

So none of the five lovers was able to win the hand of Kaguya Hime, and the Princess stayed with the bamboo cutter, growing more and more beautiful.

Then the Emperor himself came to court her. He had tried several times to summon her to his palace, but, as she had persistently refused to comply with his order, he finally had come to her home. He called her close to him, took her hand, and asked her to be his Empress.

Kaguya Hime thanked him for the honor, but said that she could not marry him because she was not of his world. "I was born in a celestial world," she said. "I cannot be united with a man of your world."

And as the Emperor still persisted, she turned herself into a blue mist and faded from his view.

Sadly the Emperor rose to his feet and started to leave the house. Then Kaguya Hime showed herself, and told

him that he might remain if he would be content with being merely her friend.

For three years after that the Emperor and Kaguya Hime met each other and amused themselves with an exchange of poems.

On the fifteenth night of the eighth month of the third year, the bamboo cutter and Kaguya Hime were watching the full moon, when tears gathered in the eyes of the Princess. Turning to her foster father, she said that she was the Princess of the Moonland and that now she must return to her home.

The bamboo cutter was startled. He begged her to stay, saying that he was an old man, that she was the only one he could call his own, and that, if she should leave him he would die of loneliness.

Kaguya Hime was torn with pity of the old man, but it was not in her power to remain in this world any longer. So she comforted him as well as she could and prepared for her departure.

The bamboo cutter, out of despair, spoke of the misfortune to the messenger whom the Emperor had sent to Kaguya Hime. The Emperor immediately sent an army of two thousand soldiers to the home of the bamboo cutter and tried to prevent the departure of Kaguya Hime. Half of these soldiers stationed themselves on the roof of the house, and half on the ground, all waiting the arrival of the Moonlanders. A strong woman took the Princess into a sedan and held her in her arms, while the bamboo cutter stood at the door of the sedan, saying that he would

shoot the Moonlanders if they should try to take the Princess away.

While the men were preparing to keep the Princess on earth, the great full moon grew nearer and brighter, flooding the house of the bamboo cutter with a golden light more powerful than the rays of the sun. Then a mass of shimmering white cloud sailed down from mid-sky and hung about five feet above the ground. Strange men of great dignity in the flowing cloaks of golden color were standing on the cloud, holding a jeweled carriage in their midst.

The soldiers of the Emperor raised a great clamor to drive these men away, but their hands were numb and they could scarcely raise their swords. And when one of great courage and strength tried to shoot, his arrow flew off like a wind-blown grass blade and clattered to the ground.

By and by, out of the jeweled carriage on the cloud came a lady of queenly grace who spoke to the bamboo cutter. "I allowed our Princess to live with you as a reward for the deeds of kindness you had done. But now the time for her return has come. You must be brave and send her away."

The old man clasped his hands in supplication and pleaded with the lady. "I have kept the Princess for the past twenty years, and in that time she has become very dear to me. If she should leave me now, I shall die of sorrow and loneliness. Will you not have the kindness to let me keep her a little longer?"

But even the lady of the Moonland could not change the course of destiny. With tears of pity trembling in her eyes she told the old man that neither his sorrow nor her sympathy could keep the Princess in his home. Then turning toward the sedan where Kaguya Hime was hiding, she called the Princess to leave the earth and return to her home.

Thereupon, the door of the sedan opened of itself and the strong woman holding the Princess wandered out as if in a dream.

Kaguya Hime stepped down from the arms of the woman and came to the bamboo cutter. "I am going now, father," she said. "Will you not dry your tears and bid me farewell?"

"How can I stop the flow of my tears?" sobbed the old man. "How can I bear to see you go? My heart is broken. I am the loneliest man in the world."

Kaguya Hime then removed her outer garment and dropped it on his lap. "This you will keep to remember me by," she said. "Farewell, dear father. Be comforted by the thought that I shall ever be thinking of you. Do not forget to look at the moon when it is full, because then I shall be sending my love to you."

Then she took the flying scarf and the box containing the potent of Fuji, or No Death, from a heavenly man, and gave the box to the messenger of the Emperor. "This I shall leave for your master," she said. "Tell him, now that I must wear my flying scarf and return to the Moonland, I know how much I loved him."



*The silvery cloud slowly rose and sailed
into the home of the golden light.*

And with this she put on her flying scarf, went to the jeweled carriage, and turned her face toward the moon. The silvery cloud carrying the strange men and the carriage slowly rose and sailed into the home of the golden light.

When the cloud had faded from view and the moon had grown smaller and less bright, the messenger returned to the palace and gave the potent of No Death to the Emperor.

The Emperor took the potent and listened to the account of Kaguya Hime's departure. Then he gave the potent to the messenger and told him to return it to the Princess by burning it on the very tiptop of the highest mountain. "We have lost her and our heart flounders in the tears of endless sorrow," he said. "How can we bear to take the potent of No Death and live forever?"

So, the next full-moon night the potent of Fuji was taken to the summit of the highest mountain and burned. And even now we can see the smoke of the burning potent rising toward the moon.

And because the potent of No Death was burned atop the snow-crested, wave-shaped mountain of purplish blue on the coast of Suma, the people gave the mountain the name of Fuji.

THE COMING OF THE PAPER CARP

ONCE upon a time a large carp fish lived in Lake Suma. This carp had the soul of a bird and ever wanted to fly up into the sunlight and look upon trees and houses and people. He was also very fond of children, and was unhappy because he was so big and children were afraid of him.

One day he heard that a little boy had come into the lake and was playing in the garden of the King Dragon. Immediately he went to see the boy.

The boy was looking at the crystal gate of the palace. He was a beautiful child, with cheeks like pink shells and eyes like the black pearls on the crown of the King Dragon. He was quite happy, too, for he did not know that anyone who came into that palace could never return to his home. He stood there for a moment, admiring the beautiful gate, then turned to look at the green palace. This palace looked like a huge green moon, made of the clearest emerald you have ever seen, and the path toward it was pebbled with fire opals.

The carp followed the boy and spoke to him. "Good afternoon, little friend! How do you like our palace?"

The boy looked back and gasped in horror. Quickly he turned and ran toward the palace.

"Wait, little friend," the carp called. "Do not be afraid of me. I am not going to hurt you. I just want to be your friend. Wait, I say!"

Still the boy kept running, and soon he started to cry.

The carp let him run until he became tired and dropped among the water grass to hide himself. Then he spoke to him very gently. "Look here, young man, you misunderstand me. I am a big fish, but not the kind that eats boys. Besides, I have just had a big meal and am not hungry. So you need not be afraid of me."

"Oh, Mr. Fish," the boy cried, shaking all over, "please do not eat me! Please do not eat me!"

"Come, now, little fellow," said the carp. "Have I not just told you that I would not eat little boys? Stop crying and talk to me. What is your name and where did you come from?"

In a little while the boy became less fearful. He came out of the water grass, and said that his name was Taro and that he had come from a house on the lake shore. "Perhaps you have seen it," he said. "It is a small brown house with hedges around it, and there are big bamboo trees in the garden."

The carp thought a while. Suddenly he clapped his fins together and cried, "Now I know who you are. You are the boy who makes those pretty boats with bamboo leaves and puts them on our lake."

"Oh, did you see me do that?" the boy cried, coming closer to the carp. "I do that nearly every day, you know."

"Yes, I know it," said the carp. "I have often watched you climb one of those bamboo trees and take the leaves. It must be fun to go so high and look down."

"Yes, it is great fun. I can see the tops of our hedges

and low trees, and sometimes even the roof of our house. When there is a wind, the bamboo tree swings back and forth so that I seem to be flying. One time I carried up small pieces of colored paper and threw them down, and they scattered like butterflies, some flying clear away into the clouds."

"Yes, yes, I know it," said the carp with a sigh. "I wish I could climb up the tree and sway in the wind. It must be wonderful."

And because the carp seemed so sorry that he could not climb the bamboo tree, Taro took pity on him and tried to comfort him. "Oh, but you have this pretty lake to live in," he said. "And, besides, you can swim away up to the sky of the water and look down upon the palace. Is it not as much fun as going up the bamboo tree?"

"No!" the carp cried, shaking his head so hard that he seemed to have fifty eyes instead of two. "It is no fun to live in here. There is no sunlight here, and no air. I love sunlight and air. When I plow my way up on to the shore and warm my back in the sun and fill my lungs with air, I feel so happy that I want to dance. I wish I were a bird or at least a flying fish. Then what a lot of fun I could have!"

"I wish you were, too," said Taro. "Then you could fly up to my bamboo tree and swing with me."

They sighed together and were silent for a while.

"Well," said the carp finally, "wishing to be a bird will not make me a bird. So I had better be satisfied with what I am. But I am very glad that you have come. Master

Taro, for it will give me the chance to hear about the things around your home."

The carp took Taro around the place, showing him the green palace, which was made of emerald; the red palace, which was made of ruby; the purple palace, which was made of amethyst; the five-colored palace, which was made of the rainbow; and so on. He also showed him the arena of lotus leaf where tree frogs were holding a wrestling match, the cave in which crawfish were practicing backward jumps, and the hole where trout were learning how to take the bait off the hook without being caught. After that he took the boy to his home and introduced him to the smaller carp. These smaller carp were as much pleased to have Taro as the big carp was, and they entertained him with all kinds of games and tricks.

So Taro had a wonderful time and was very glad that he had come. But, by and by, he began to feel lonely for his home. He thought of his mother and his bamboo trees. He did not enjoy the things in the lake as much as he had, and from time to time he paused to look wistfully toward the shore. Finally, he said that he wanted to go home.

So the time had come at last when Taro must hear the terrible truth that he was a prisoner in the lake and must never go back. And, knowing that, the carp was full of pity. He wondered what the boy would do when he should try to leave the lake and was held back by the gate-man. He wondered, too, what Taro's mother would do

when she heard that her boy could not return to her. In despair, he begged the boy to remain a little longer because there were many other things he should see. But that, of course, did not help him much, because Taro had already seen all there was to see. And even as the carp was preparing a new kind of entertainment for the boy, the boy bade him farewell and hurried toward the shore.

The carp wanted to go with the boy and see that the gateman was not too hard on him, but that was against the rules of the lake, and so he stayed back and watched the boy go.

Taro went away after turning back again and again to wave his hand at the carp and to promise that he would make a great number of leaf boats as soon as he got home and put them on the water for the carp to play with. But in a little while he came back, breathless and full of anger. "Oh, Mr. Carp," he panted, "that horrible gatekeeper would not open the gate for me. He says I am a prisoner and must stay here always. What did he mean by that?"

For a moment the carp was tempted to lie—to say something that would cheer the boy. Later, however, knowing that such a lie would serve only to make things harder for Taro, he told him the truth.

"He is right, Master Taro," he said. "You are to stay here forever." Then he explained that the King Dragon made it a rule to hold all that came into the lake, so that they would not tempt other people with stories of the things they saw under the water.

Taro was broken-hearted. He begged the carp to let

him go this once, for he would never again come into the lake; and, then, hearing that the carp had no power to help him, he threw himself down on the water moss and began to cry.

The carp rubbed his back with his fin and tried to comfort him. "Now, now, Master Taro," he said. "Do not take it so hard. Just think what I have to do. I love sunlight and air as much as you do, and yet I have to stay here all my life. So you had better stop crying and try to make yourself happy. We are all full of sympathy for you, and will do our best to help you forget your home."

But, of course, Taro was not to be comforted. He lay there on the water moss, his hands clutching the sand, and he sobbed and sobbed.

For many days after that the boy cried, refusing to eat or sleep. By and by the color faded from his cheeks, and the luster from his eyes, and he became so weak that he could hardly walk.

All that time the carp stayed with the boy, waiting for him to forget his sorrow. Then, when Taro showed no sign of forgetting it, he finally made up his mind to take the boy home, no matter what the consequences. He knew that such an act would be punished with the severest penalty the King Dragon could think of; but he was not going to sit by and see the boy cry himself to death.

So, one night, when everybody was asleep, he put his mouth to Taro's ear and whispered, "Cry no more, Master Taro, because I will take you home."

The boy jerked up his head in surprise. "What!" he cried. "You will take me . . ."

"Sh—h—h—!" The carp raised his fin to his mouth. "Not so loud, Master Taro. Yes, you will go home now—to your mother and your bamboo trees. I am going to put you in my mouth and carry you to the shore."

"Put me in your mouth!" Taro cried. "You mean you will swallow me?"

"No, I will not swallow you," the carp assured him. "I am just going to keep you in my mouth so that the gate-man will not see you when we pass by him. Are you ready?" And going closer to the boy, he opened his enormous mouth.

Taro sprang back in terror. "W—w—wait a minute!" he cried. "I—I must think."

"No, no; there is no time for that!" said the carp. "We must do this thing quickly, or somebody may see us. Come, Master Taro, get into my mouth. You need have no fear of me. I am your friend and am only trying to help you."

"Yes, I understand that," said Taro, "but you might swallow me by mistake. I often do that, myself. One time I was holding mother's thimble between my teeth, and it went down my throat before I knew it."

"You may do such a thing," the carp said, "but I am old and very careful. Come, now, are you ready?" And he pushed his mouth still closer to Taro.

But Taro was still afraid. He shrank back farther, and

then began to call for help. So the carp had to rush after him and suck him into his mouth.

"Let me out! Let me out!" Taro shrieked, jumping up and down in the carp's mouth. The carp pushed him into his gills and hurried toward the shore. He almost swallowed the boy when the gateman slapped him on the back and said it was a beautiful night. But he managed to cough him out, roll him in his cheek, and proceed.

Reaching the edge of the water, he spit the boy out clear on to the shore, and quickly swam away.

The next morning there was great excitement in the lake. The King Dragon called all the fish in the place to his palace and asked them what they had done the night before.

At first the carp was afraid to tell the truth. But by and by, seeing the King try to fasten the guilt of sending Taro home on an old trout, he stepped up and confessed what he had done.

The King thereupon turned upon him with great fury and commanded him to leave the lake at once and never return. "I will not kill you," he growled, "because death is too easy for you. I will let you live and suffer forever. I will cast you out of my domain, and then turn you into paper so that you will never be able to return. Leave this lake before you become paper, you scoundrel, and lie on the shore, tossed by the wind and beaten by the rain and snow, until you are torn to shreds under the feet of swine."

So, the carp left his friends, passed the gate of the lake,

leaped on to the shore, then, suddenly turning into paper, crumpled up on the sand. There he must stay forever, bleaching in the wind and rain, as the King had said, and then be torn under the feet of swine. It was certainly a terrible doom, and the carp would have cried if he could. But he was now a paper fish, and all he could do was see and feel and hear. So he lay there quietly, waiting with terror the coming of rain and snow. He was not afraid of wind, because, as I said before, he loved air.

Several hours after he had become an outcast, the carp saw a boy and a woman come toward him. They were Taro and his mother. "Look, mother," he heard Taro say, pointing toward the place where he lay, "that is where I came out. He was a very kind fish. I wish I could see him again and thank him for saving me."

Nearer and nearer the boy and his mother came. "Look out!" the carp wanted to cry. "Do not step on me!" But of course he could not speak. He had but to watch and wait to be stepped on.

When Taro's foot was about to come down on the carp's eye, his mother suddenly called, "Do not step on that fish!"

Taro jumped back and looked at the carp. "What is that?" he asked.

"I do not know. It looks like a fish, but seems to be made of paper."

Taro bent down and touched the carp. "Yes, it is made of paper," he said. Then looking at the fish more care-

fully, he said, "It looks like the carp that saved me. But, of course, he was a real fish, not a paper one. What shall we do with this?"

His mother thought a moment. "Oh, I know!" she cried. "To-morrow is Boys' Day. Let us hang the fish on our flagpost instead of the flag. Perhaps the carp that saved you may see it, and it will make him happy."

So early the next morning the carp went up on the flagpost and danced in the sunlight and wind, and looked upon the trees and the houses and the children all day long.

And now, on Boys' Day in Japan, paper carp are hung on the flagposts, and under these paper carp the boys speak of the great kindness the old carp had done for Taro.

THE CARP RIDER

DO you know why the carp wear their mustaches so short nowadays? They used to wear them long, you know, like those of a lobster or a catfish. But now they have them clipped like the mustaches of Charlie. Do you know why? If you do not, you must hear the story of Kai and his paper carp.

Kai lived in the country where the boys celebrate all their birthdays together on the 5th of May, instead of on the days they were born. This day is called Sekku, and on that day every boy flies his paper carp from the flag-post of his house, and plays with his friends, spinning tops, flying kites, or holding sham battles with swords made of iris leaves.

It was the night after this day of Sekku. Kai was folding his paper carp. The paper carp must be taken down, folded, and put away before midnight of Sekku, because, while most of them are toy fish, having been made of paper, some are real carp, which were turned into paper for having come ashore against the order of the Dragon King, and these latter will become real fish again if left on the post or on the floor overnight, and escape. So Kai was usually very careful about putting them away before he went to bed.

But that night Kai was very tired and sleepy, mainly because he had not slept the night before. The boys of Kai's country can hardly sleep on the night before Sekku, even as you cannot sleep on the night before Christmas.

Besides, Kai had a special reason for not being able to sleep, because just before bed time his uncle had given him a wonderful paper carp.

This paper carp was one of the largest and most beautiful in the city. It measured about fifteen feet, and it was so wide that Kai could easily crawl in and out of its mouth. Its eyes were as large as serving trays, and its mustaches were so long that if Kai's father had worn them under his nose they would have come clear down to his toes. It had side fins which were as wide and long as the sleeves of his mother's party dress, and the tail could cover him from head to foot. Oh, yes! it was a big one; and a beautiful one, too, because its scales were like gold-fringed fans, and its yellowish belly was streaked with silver.

When a boy receives a thing like that just before going to bed, he cannot sleep very well. Although he went to his bed at the usual hour and stayed there until he was called, he knew everything that happened during the hours he was supposed to be asleep.

So that now he was very tired and sleepy. By the time he had folded his six smaller carp and picked up the tail of the large one, his eyes became blinded with yawn-tears, and his head became so heavy that he could hardly hold it up.

Still Kai could not afford to leave his best carp on the floor. With great difficulty he folded its tail, and then, sitting up with a sigh, wiped the yawn-tears from his eyes.

"Let go of my tail!" someone cried. "Let go! Let go!"

Kai opened his eyes with a start and looked around. The voice came from several feet away, where the head of his new carp lay, and it was the head itself that was speaking. And as Kai stared in amazement, he noticed that the head was no longer flat and wrinkled, but was round and smooth and shining like the head of a real fish.

"Did you hear what I said?" the head cried again. "Take your hand away from my tail or I will eat you up." It opened its big mouth ever so wide, showing the hook-shaped awful teeth.

Kai was terribly frightened. He took his hand away from the tail and shrunk back, shivering so hard that he thought he would fall to pieces.

As soon as the hand of Kai was taken off its tail, the body of the fish became as round and smooth and shining as its head. The new carp turned into a real fish. It rolled on its back and spread its fins in a long yawn. Then again rolling back on its belly, it said: "My! but it feels good to be a fish again. And that in time to see the moonbeam race. Oh, what luck!"

It flapped the floor with its tail, leaping up into the air, and went to the window. There it turned back toward Kai, and bared its teeth in scorn. "Good-by, you fool," it sneered. "May your uncle spank you hard for losing me." And he flew out of the window and made straight for the sea.

Kai crawled to the window and watched the fish until

it struck the water. Then he laid his head on the window sill and began to cry.

"Don't cry, Master Kai," someone spoke from behind. "Tell me what has happened and maybe I can help you."

It was one of those white, ruby-eyed moon rabbits who hop on the wave tops every night of a full moon. "I have never spoken to you before," he said; "but I like you because you are so kind to my little brothers in your back yard. I saw you crying, and came up to help."

Kai wiped his tears and told the rabbit of his trouble, asking him if there were any way to recover the carp.

The rabbit thought awhile.

"I don't know if we can get him back or not," he said. "If you had folded at least half of him, the thing would be easy. But you folded only his tail.

"Still," the rabbit continued, "since folding its tail is better than not folding it at all, the Dragon King may give us a hearing. Let us go down and see."

So Kai hopped on the back of the rabbit and went down to the palace of the Dragon King.

The palace was at the bottom of the sea, and it was so dark there that Kai became frightened.

"I can't see a thing down here," he said. "Why do they keep it so dark?"

"It's on account of the moonbeam race," answered the moon rabbit. "Look up, and in a little while you'll be able to see the racers bring down our moonbeams."

Kai clambered down from the back of the rabbit and

looked up. In a little while, something like a firefly appeared away above him.

"There they come," cried the rabbit. "Now watch."

As they watched, the light point grew larger and brighter, showing that it was flying down toward them. Then a few more sparkles, coming out of the darkness, followed the first one. A little later, twenty or thirty light points flashed out and raced down toward Kai.

"Oh, dear!" Kai cried in excitement. "Aren't they beautiful! Where are they going? They seem to be coming toward us."

"They are coming toward us," replied the rabbit. "We are standing outside the palace gate. But don't talk, or you may miss something."

Even as he spoke, a great number of light points came out from above and raced down like the shower of a hundred fireworks. Nearer and nearer they came, brightening the whole space above; and then, quite suddenly, the first rider of the night rode within ten feet of Kai. He was a boy, half the size of Kai. He wore a polished armor of black sea shells, and rode on a huge lobster, holding in one hand a bit of moonbeam pierced on the point of a silver lance, and in the other the whiskers of the lobster.

The rider was followed by other boys and girls of his size, each riding a lobster and carrying a moonbeam. The girls were wearing long dresses of red, purple, or rainbow color, and their long green hair flapped behind them like streamers.

The racers rode past Kai, entered the coral gate of the palace, and planted their lances in the courtyard. Then they dismounted and marched toward the palace, where the Dragon King was waiting for them with prizes.

In the glow of the moonbeams Kai could now see the palace. It was much more beautiful than Kai had imagined. He had heard many times that it was made of red and white coral and many precious stones—white coral for the walls, and red coral for the doors, amethyst for the roof and emerald for the steps and diamonds for the King's throne. But the palace which he had imagined was not one-hundredth so beautiful as the one now before his eyes. And, to make it seem more beautiful, there were the rows and rows of moonbeams shimmering around it like a golden sea.

When the winning racers had received their rewards, the King announced that, as usual, he would listen to a few petitions.

The rabbit and Kai went to him and told him of their trouble.

The King thought awhile. "I am sorry to disappoint you, Master Kai," he said, "but I cannot give you back the carp as you wish. You say you folded his tail, but the tail is a very small part of the fish. However, as Mr. Moon Rabbit is a good friend of mine, and you are usually more careful about your carp than most of the children, I will give you a fighting chance. In a little while our racers must take back all the moonbeams they have brought down. When they do that, you will go with

them on the back of your carp. Your part will be to keep the carp from winning the race, and at the same time to prevent him from shaking you off his back. If you can do that without asking anyone how you should ride the fish, I will turn the carp into paper again and give him back to you. If not, you must go home without him."

Kai was very much disappointed. How could a boy without any experience in riding hope to ride this fast-going, slippery fish—especially when it tried to shake him off? He would be swept from its back in no time.

"It isn't fair," Kai said to the rabbit as they came away from the King. "The King ought to know that I can't ride the carp. What shall I do?"

"Ride him and see," was the rabbit's answer. "I think you can do it. You rode me on the way down here, you know, and I was going very fast then."

"Oh yes, I could ride you," said Kai. "But then, you didn't try to shake me off; and, besides, you have your ears for me to hold on to. The carp has nothing like them."

Here the rabbit did a queer thing. He shut his mouth and wriggled his whiskers. He wriggled them and wriggled them and wriggled them.

"I don't know about that," he said at last. "Of course he has no ears; but then, there may be something just as good. I am sorry I can't tell you what it is, but I am sure you'll find something to hold on to."

And he wriggled his whiskers again.

Kai wondered why the rabbit wriggled his whiskers

in that way. Perhaps he has a fly in his nose, he thought, and wants to sneeze.

"I shall try, then," said Kai. "But don't laugh if I should fall off."

Soon it was time to return the moonbeams. The racers mounted their lobsters and pulled the lances from the ground.

Kai climbed on the back of the carp and looked for something to hold on to. The carp, being a sly fellow, raised the ends of its side fins up toward Kai. Kai grasped them, and turned to say good-by to the rabbit.

Here again the rabbit acted in a queer way. He frowned, shook his head, and wriggled his whiskers harder than ever.

"The fly in his nose must be hurting him," Kai thought. "Poor Mr. Rabbit. I wish I could put my finger in and take it out."

"Bood-by, Mr. Rabbit!" he yelled. "Thank you very much for helping me."

Even as he spoke, a great lantern fish filled its belly with air and blew on a conch shell.

The carp struck the sea bottom with its mighty tail, flying up so high that it seemed to leap out of the sea. Then it flapped its side fins, which Kai was holding, jerking them so suddenly that it nearly broke Kai's arms.

Kai let go of one fin and clung to the other with both hands.

"Hold on tight, Master Kai," said the carp mockingly. "I don't want to beat you so soon."

And it moved its fins so fast that Kai swung like the spinner in a whirlpool.

Still the boy did not loosen his hold.

"So you won't get off, eh?" hissed the carp. "Well, I'll show you." It swerved a little out of its course and made straight at a black mass which hung like a cloud far above.

By and by something like a long wide girdle flew down and wound itself around Kai's neck. It was a huge seaweed.

Kai moved his head back and forth to get it off. But the carp was speeding so fast that it could not be taken off, and while he was twisting his head in all directions, another kelp caught him on the arms. Then, all at once, he was swung into a great mass of seaweeds, which caught him on the head, on the face, on the shoulders, on the feet, choking him, crushing him. And the carp went on faster than ever.

Finally, Kai loosened his grip on the fin and dropped back.

The carp gave a great yell and dashed away. On and on it rushed until Kai could not see it any longer. Then it paused a moment and looked back at him. Suddenly it careened and returned. It was an imp and wanted to have a laugh at Kai. It had gone so far ahead of the other racers that it could come back and talk to Kai without losing the race.

Reaching the boy who was struggling to get out of the seaweed, it cried: "Well, well! Look who is here! A



Kai wound the mustache still tighter around his arm, and caught the end between his teeth.

cute little baby all by himself! Where's your mamma, little one? What! She went away? What a shame! Don't cry, little baby. I will love you—Uncle Carp will love you." It swam around Kai and rubbed his head with its tail.

As the carp was circling around him, Kai felt something like a cord touch his cheek. Kai looked up. It hung from the nose of the fish. It was its mustache. Then, like a flash, Kai understood why the rabbit had wriggled his whiskers. He grasped the mustache and wound it around his arm.

"Hey! let go of that!" yelled the carp. "It hurts!"

He tugged it this way and that to tear it from Kai's hands.

Kai wound the mustache still tighter around his arm, and caught the end between his teeth.

"Let go, I say!" the carp yelled again. "If you don't let go of it, I will eat you up." It swung round and tried to strike him with its fin. Kai kept himself out of reach, and held on to the mustache.

In the meantime the racers came up and passed them. The carp was frantic. It wriggled, twisted, rolled over, whirled round, doing all it knew to free its mustache from the hands of Kai.

And all the time the moonbeams, borne by the racers, grew dimmer and dimmer; and then there rose a great cry, showing that the race was over.

The carp groaned, turned over, and there it floated, trembling, cursing. Then suddenly it rolled back and

said to Kai: "Quick! Get on my back. We must be home before the King turns me back into paper."

"No, I won't," said Kai between clenched teeth. "If I let go of your mustache and get on your back you will throw me off again."

"No, no. I cannot do that," the carp said, "because now I belong to you. Can't you see that I have lost my case and that I shall soon be turned into paper? I must get out of the water before I stop being a real fish. Please get on my back."

So Kai climbed on its back and came home. The carp flew in through the window, then suddenly turning into paper, fell on the floor. Kai tried to raise himself, but was too tired to move. He lay as he was and fell asleep. When his mother woke him he was still lying on the back of the paper carp.

So the poor carp had lost the chance to gain freedom on account of its long mustache. And when other carp heard of the story, they all went to the barber shops of crabs and crawfish and had their mustaches trimmed short, so that the next lazy boy who leaves his paper carp unfolded cannot have a chance to recover it.

ONE LAUGH TOO MANY

FLEAMI was practicing high jumping on a hill near his pond. Fleami was one of the tiniest tree frogs imaginable—so small, indeed, that he was often mistaken for a fly. He was a beautiful creature, all green in body and having a pair of golden eyes. He was also a clever frog because he could jump or swim better than any other frog in his pond, and could croak loud enough to awaken the sleepest child; and, the most wonderful of all, he could forecast rain three to five days ahead.

This wonder frog was practicing high jumping when he landed on the queerest rock he had ever seen. This rock was dark brown and was covered with numerous small lumps. But what puzzled him most was that the rock was soft and sort of slimy.

Fleami stood up and rubbed his nose, wondering what kind of rock it could be.

At this time the rock began to shake. It shook a few times, and then suddenly it leaped up, shot through the air, and came down, knocking Fleami off his feet.

Fleami dropped down, rolled over, scrambled to his feet, and looked at the rock. There he saw a thing that made him croak in horror. In shape the thing resembled Fleami, but it was so big that Fleami could not see its top unless he lay down on his back, and it had a stomach large enough to hold a hundred frogs like Fleami.

Fleami was terrified. He stood there wild-eyed and breathless, too frightened to move.

By and by the head of this horrible monster swung down, and a pair of enormous blood-colored eyes focused themselves upon the shivering little green frog.

The thing stared so hard at Fleami, that he began to feel dizzy. Then it opened its huge mouth and demanded, "Tell me, little flea, where is the pond where our cousins, the tree frogs, are said to live?"

Fleami tried to answer, but he was shaking so hard that he could not speak. He rolled up his eyes, shook his head, and swallowed and swallowed.

This seemed very much like saying that he did not know, and it made the monster angry. "You lie!" he hissed. "The tree frogs are our cousins, and, as such, they are as famous as we are. You cannot help knowing where they live. Tell me quickly, little flea, or I will clap my paw over you and flatten you up like a fly wing." And it raised its great paw.

"P-p-p-please!" Fleami croaked. "I-I-I did not say I-I d-did not know. I know it, o-o-of course. That is m-m-my home. I-I-I am a tree frog myself."

"What!" hissed the monster. "You a tree frog?"

"Y-y-es, sir. I-I-I think I am." And he wiped the sweat off his brow.

The monster gave him another stare. Suddenly it threw back its head and shook its enormous stomach in laughter. "You miserable little liar!" he hissed after a while. "How dare you impersonate our cousins? Do

you think I am too foolish to know that you are either a flea or fly?"

This made Fleami a bit angry, for there was nothing more distasteful to him than to be mistaken for a six-legged creature. And, because he was angry, he stopped shivering. "I am not a flea, or a fly. I am a frog. I have only four legs." And he proudly showed his legs.

This made the monster stop and think. It counted Fleami's legs a few times. "There must be some mistake," it hissed at last. "Are you sure that you are a frog? You are not, perhaps, a lizard or something?"

"A lizard has a tail," Fleami answered. "I have no tail. See." He turned around to prove his word.

"Hum!" the monster sniffed. "Then perhaps you *are* a tree frog."

It looked at Fleami from head to feet. "Yes," it hissed, "you do look somewhat like us. Tell me, are all the tree frogs as small as you?"

"No," Fleami answered. "There are some that are almost as big as your paw. I am the smallest frog in our pond.

"By the way," he asked, suddenly remembering what his grandfather had told him about there being a tribe of giant toads who were related to the tree frogs, "you are not one of the giant toads, are you?"

The monster raised its head and crossed its paws over its breast. "Yes," it answered in a most impressive voice. "I am Mr. Morror, leader of the giant toads."

"Good!" Fleami croaked in joy. "I am Fleami, the

champion high jumper and rain croaker of the tree frogs. I am very pleased to meet you, sir." And he made a deep bow to the visitor.

Morror did not return the bow. He kept his head erect, staring down upon Fleami from his great height. "So this is a tree frog," he muttered contemptuously. "Well, I am sorry that I came. I must go away at once."

"Go away?" Fleami croaked in surprise. "Are you not coming to see your cousins?"

Morror glared at Fleami. "Our cousins indeed!" he hissed. "You are no cousins of ours. You are the freaks that resemble us as monkeys resemble men."

"We are no freaks," Fleami returned hotly. "We are real frogs, and we know everything real frogs should know."

"You are freaks!" Morror hissed menacingly. "If you say you are not, I will suck you into my stomach." He bent down, rounded his mouth, and sucked, raising a great whirlwind before Fleami.

Fleami crouched with a gasp and leaped away. "No, no, Morror," he said with a smile. "You cannot bully me into saying that we are freaks. We are frogs. We know as many things as you do—maybe more."

This made Morror very angry. He got down on all fours and tried to catch Fleami.

But Fleami was too quick for him. He hopped around like a flea, and every now and then, jumping on to Morror's ear, frightened him with a terrific croak.

Finally Morror gave up the chase. He sat down on

his haunches and thought awhile. By and by he said to Fleami, "This will not get us anywhere. You must come up to our home and prove that you are as good as we. Are you going to come—or are you afraid?"

If Morror had not asked if he were afraid, Fleami might have refused to go. As it was, he said that it was a good idea and that he would go at once and show those toads a thing or two.

So Fleami followed Morror to the land of giant toads.

These toads lived on a flat hill overlooking the tribes of insects. They were enormous creatures, mostly as large as Morror, and they waddled around, dragging their stomachs in the dust. Catching sight of Morror and Fleami, they hop-hopped toward them and heard Morror's account of his meeting with Fleami. Then they looked at Fleami and laughed at the idea of this tiny frog trying to prove that he was their equal.

This was too much for Fleami. He jumped on to Morror's head and croaked with all his might, "Laugh, you fools. Laugh while you can, because in a little while I will make you feel so small that you will cry in shame."

"Silence, you impudent little flea!" Morror hissed, knocking Fleami off his head. "I will teach you to be civil to your superiors." Flop! came his right paw, missing Fleami by a hair's breadth. Flop! came his left paw, almost knocking Fleami off his feet.

"Morror!" somebody hissed from behind the crowd. Morror jumped up as if he had heard the hiss of a serpent.

An old toad with wrinkled face and deep-set eyes

stepped forward and stared Morror in the eye. He was evidently the king of Toadland because he had a certain dignity about him, and was listened to with great respect. He scolded Morror and several others for treating Fleami so unkindly, then asked Fleami why he thought that the tree frogs were the equals of the giant toads.

Fleami curtsied to the King, and told him that the tree frogs could jump and swim as well as the toads, that they could croak louder than any creature in frog shape, that they could forecast rain, and that, therefore, they were entitled to equal rights with the toads.

The King listened in silence and pondered awhile. Then he said that he wished to see how well Fleami could do those things, and that he would be very much pleased if he would perform the tricks in his presence.

Fleami bowed again. "I shall be very happy to do your bidding, Sire," he said. "But, rather than play those tricks alone, I should like to do them with some of your champions. Would Your Majesty have the kindness to select someone to compete with me?"

The King Toad nodded enthusiastically. "That will be very interesting," he said. Turning to Morror, he commanded, "You shall have a match with this frog. Control yourself well and hold up our honor."

So Morror and Fleami went down to the field to compete in jumping, swimming, and croaking.

First came the jumping. Morror crouched down, flattening his stomach on the ground, and jumped, vaulting a height twice his length.

Fleami snickered. "That is not jumping," he wanted to say. "It is just hopping." Being a polite frog, however, he kept his mouth shut. He stooped, flew up, turned a beautiful somersault in mid-sky, then, shooting down, landed lightly on the very spot from which he had gone up.

Next came the swimming. Morror and Fleami jumped into the river and raced toward the opposite shore. Morror was a fairly good swimmer, but he was no match for Fleami. Fleami cut through the water like a torpedo bug, then, coming back, swam around Morror.

The last game was croaking. In this, of course, Morror could not hold a candle to Fleami. For all his big throat and powerful lungs, the sound he produced was more of a whine than a croak. It was certainly no match for the trumpetlike voice of Fleami.

So Morror was defeated in every game, and, because of that, he became very angry. "You may be able to beat me in these games," he hissed, "but I am stronger than you, and I can eat you up." He rounded his mouth and started to swallow Fleami.

This made the King Toad very angry. He had him caught and brought to him. "You have disgraced us with your lack of sportsmanship. Because of that, you shall become a slave to Fleami during his stay. You shall carry him around on your back and do his bidding. If you fail to do this, you shall be banished from our land."

So Fleami went around the place on the back of Morror and had a wonderful time. He successfully forecast

rain a few times, and won the admiration of the entire Toadland.

But while he was so enjoying his visit, a terrible thing happened. Morror sneaked up to him while he was taking a nap in the shade and swallowed him.

Fleami was horrified. He ran around in Morror's stomach, trying to find the way out. But the way up was tightly closed and the wall of the stomach was too tough to break through. Then, to make matters worse, all kinds of insects poured down into the place. Flies, spiders, mosquitoes, grasshoppers—they all came down. Some of these insects were dead, but many were alive. And the live ones were very angry, and they attacked Fleami because he looked somewhat like the toad who had swallowed them. The flies buzzed around his ears, and the mosquitoes sank their bills into his back, while the spiders covered his face with their nets and the crickets started to bite his toes off. Oh, it was terrible! Fleami felt pretty much like a baby mouse in a band of tomcats.

While Fleami was fighting off these insects, and at the same time trying to find the way out of the stomach, he heard a voice outside. "Where is Fleami?" it said. It was the voice of the King.

"I do not know, Your Majesty," said the voice of Morror from way, way up. "I am looking for him myself."

"It is strange," said the voice of the King. "I thought I saw him sleeping here not long ago."

"That was what I thought, too. Perhaps he was here but walked off in his sleep and got lost."

"What? Does he walk in his sleep?"

"Yes, Your Majesty. He not only walks, but jumps and swims. The other day he leaped from his bed, went over to that swimming place, and swam around for hours."

"What a strange thing to do! And you did not waken him?"

"I used to waken him, but not any more, because every time I did it he became very angry and made me do many hard things. He is ever so selfish and cruel."

At this time it occurred to Fleami that, since he could hear the King and Morrор, the King and Morrор also might be able to hear him. "I will croak as hard as I can," he said to himself; "and perhaps the King will know that I am here."

So he filled his lungs and croaked a few times, then listened.

"Why," came the voice of the King, "that is his voice! I wonder where he can be?"

"Yes, yes," came the voice of Morrор. "I hear him, too. Where can he be? I must go look. Fleami! Fleami! Where are you?" The stomach leaped up with a jerk and came down, leaped up and came down.

Fleami's heart sank. Morrор was hopping away from the King on the pretext of looking for him, so that the King could not hear the croak in his stomach. In horror Fleami filled his lungs again and croaked over and over, but the stomach was jerking up and down so hard that it constantly threw him off his feet, and when one is tum-

bling about like that he can not yell very loudly. Consequently Morror managed to get away from the King and hide himself in a secluded spot. There he heaved a sigh of relief and spoke to Fleami. "Now, you croak, you little flea," he hissed. "Croak until your accursed throat will burst. I am now in a place where no toad can find me, and here I am going to stay until you will have no life left in you to croak. Then I shall go back and tell my people that I could not find you even though I searched for you under every stone and behind every leaf."

To torture his victim still more, he swallowed a great number of big mosquitoes. "There, now. I shall give you some more playmates to entertain you. Am I not generous?" And he tilted back his head and started to laugh.

While Morror was so laughing, a streak of sunlight shot down through his enormous throat into his stomach. Fleami looked up and saw that the way above was open. He crouched down with great joy and jumped, flying clear out of Morror's guffawing mouth; then, hopping down lightly, he perched behind Morror's ear.

Morror was laughing so hard that he did not notice what had happened. He hugged his sides and laughed until tears rolled down his cheeks. Finally he stopped and asked: "Why do you not croak, little flea? Did I not say that you might croak as much as you wanted?"

Fleami smirked. He put his mouth close to Morror's ear and croaked as hard as he could.

Morrer jumped. "Great heaven!" he hissed. "It is Fleami. How did he get out, I wonder?"

Fleami laughed. "You laughed once too often, Morror," he croaked. "Come to your King and I will tell you how I did it." He hopped down and went back to Toadland. There he told the King what Morror had done.

Now Morror is in exile and Fleami is back in his home, telling about his adventure in the land of giant toads.

THE CRACK

WHEN Fleami, the tiniest of tree frogs, talked about this adventure in the land of giant toads, describing how he had been swallowed by the bully Morror, how he had escaped death by leaping out of the monster's throat while the latter was laughing, and how the King of the toads had caught Morror and sent him into exile, most of his friends congratulated him on his good fortune, and said that they were glad he had returned to safety. There were, however, a few who were not quite so sure about Fleami's being entirely out of danger. "Morror still lives," they said, "and as long as he lives there is a possibility of his escaping. And if he should escape, he would come straight to this place and start trouble for you. Then he may harm not only you, but all of us."

And that was exactly what happened. Even as these more careful toads were warning Fleami, Morror broke out of the prison and started toward Frogland. In the course of five or ten days Fleami heard stories of a red-eyed, wide-mouthed monster, who skulked in the shadow of the forest and attacked tree frogs, smashing them under his paws or carrying them away in his mouth. He also heard that the monster declared time and again that, although his main purpose was to get Fleami, he hated tree frogs generally and would not rest until he destroyed every one of them.

Fleami was horrified. Immediately he called a meeting of the frogs and asked them what they wanted to do.

At first the frogs did not know what course to take, but by and by someone said that they might quietly move away.

"Move away?" Fleami asked in surprise. "Do you mean that you want to leave this pond where we have lived for many generations?"

"No," answered the other frog, "it is not that we want to move away. This is the best pond we can ever have, and we want to stay. But staying here means death, and, rather than that, we might move. What do you think about it, friends?"

The other frogs thought awhile, then said that it would be the only thing they could do.

"Very well," sighed Fleami. "Let us move. But you must first give me the chance to go and talk with the King of Toadland. Perhaps he will send someone to take Morrор away."

But the frogs were too terrified to wait so long. "The King is a toad himself," they said. "He may not like to punish Morrор on account of us."

This irritated Fleami. "He may be a toad," he said, "but he is just. Otherwise, he would not have sent Morrор to prison."

"Ah, but how do you know that it was not a mere show? Perhaps he released Morrор the minute you were out of sight. No, let us not wait. Let us move before Morrор takes any more of us."

The tree frogs were not naturally so suspicious. They talked like that simply because they were frantic with fear. So that when Fleami described in detail what a fair-minded toad the King was, they agreed to wait.

"How long do you think it will take you?" they asked.

"About five days," Fleami answered.

"We shall wait five days," they said. "And if you do not come back at the end of five days we shall move."

At this time, the frogs posted to watch for Morror suddenly croaked: "There is Morror. Run!"

The terrified frogs scampered into hiding.

Fleami crawled under a tiny stone and stayed there until Morror passed by him. Then he came out and hurried toward Toadland.

The King Toad was very angry to hear about Morror's action. "We have been searching everywhere for that scoundrel," he said. "We shall send our soldiers at once. You must rest until they are ready, and go with them."

Fleami was very tired and wanted to rest, but he knew that he must start home at once, because he had been delayed on the way and now had barely enough time to get back. He thanked the King Toad for his kindness and left Toadland.

As he leaped on homeward through the short cut, Fleami's one thought was of getting there before the five days were over. If he should fail to reach home in time, all his friends would scatter away, perhaps never to meet again. He was desperate, and he leaped on like mad.

Finally he came in sight of his pond. He croaked with joy and hurried on.

By and by he heard a queer hissing voice from behind the grass by the road. He stopped with a gasp and looked into the grass. There he saw a pair of blood-colored eyes and a mouth that was rounded like a trumpet.

Fleami gasped again and tried to hop away. But it was too late. He was caught in the great whirlwind Morror had made and was carried into the latter's mouth.

Morror, however, did not swallow Fleami this time. Instead, he took him out of his mouth and, holding him in his mighty paw, spoke to him. "Well met, Mr. Flea," he hissed. "Now we shall have a nice long visit."

"Let me go, Morror," Fleami begged, struggling to free himself. "I have done you no harm. The King would not have sent you to the prison if you had not swallowed me."

"I know that," answered the great toad. "You have done me no harm and I am not going to harm you. I caught you just because I wanted to show you that I can croak better than you can."

"What?" Fleami croaked in amazement. "You caught me just because you . . .?"

"Yes," Morror nodded. "At the time we held that contest I had a sore throat and could not croak very well. But now my throat is better, and I want to show you how loudly I can croak."

This was certainly a strange thing to say, and Fleami

was so puzzled that for a time he could not speak. "Very well," he said at last. "Let me hear you croak."

"I shall croak," said Morrор, "but not before you do. The last time I did it first, and so this time you must do it first." And he set Fleami up on his hand, holding him now by the feet so that he could not escape. "Now croak, Fleami, and if you manage to croak louder than I, I shall let you go."

Fleami was more and more puzzled. He wrinkled his brow and wondered what Morrор could be up to. Deciding, however, that the best way to know Morrор's scheme was to croak and see, he filled his lungs.

At this time an idea came to Fleami. "Perhaps," he thought, "Morrор is trying to use me as a decoy. He knows that my friends will come out of hiding if I croak, and perhaps that is why he wants me to do it."

So he made a show of croaking, and then said that there was something the matter with his throat and he could not make any outcry.

Morrор's eyes glittered. "You lie!" he hissed. "You can croak, and you know it. Now croak, you little fox, or I will squeeze you until you croak in pain." And he tightened his grip on Fleami's feet.

Fleami winced in pain, but he did not croak. "Do not hurt me, Morrор," he begged. "I really cannot croak. I have been on the road for the past several days, and the dust got into my throat so that . . ."

"Very well," said Morrор, gripping Fleami's feet still

more tightly. "Be silent, then. Do not croak. Do not croak even once."

Still Fleami refused, and Morror, now mad with anger, caught the tiny fellow's head with the other paw and twisted his body back and forth.

Even then Fleami kept his silence, and finally Morror took him to a little hole, threw him in and put a huge rock over it. "You stubborn little flea," he hissed. "You shall stay there and starve until you are ready to croak."

Fleami lay still for a while. Then sitting up he started to massage his feet.

He had been doing this for several minutes when the thought of his friends waiting for him flashed into his mind. He jumped up and spoke to himself: "I cannot stay here. I must get out. I must get out before it is too late." He got down on all fours and crawled around the hole, trying to find a way out. Finding that the hole was covered with rocks and that there was no crack through which to get out, he sank down with a sigh and wondered what he should do.

At this moment a wonderful idea came to him. He got up with a cry and clapped his paws. He threw back his head and started to laugh. He did not laugh too loudly, though, because he did not want his friends to hear him, but loud enough for Morror to hear.

Pretty soon Morror's voice came from above. "What are you laughing for?"

Fleami did not answer, but laughed on.

"I say, what are you laughing for?" Morror demanded again.

"I am laughing, Morror," Fleami answered, "because you are such a fool."

"What! I a fool?"

"Yes. You are the most foolish fool I have ever seen."

"You dare say that! I will drag you out and tear out your tongue!"

"Morror," Fleami asked, "did you look carefully at this hole before putting me in?"

"Of course I did."

"And yet you did not notice that there is a crack in here?"

"There is no crack. I made sure of that."

"That is why you are a fool," Fleami said. "Here is a crack right behind this loose rock." And he made a noise like removing a rock.

"It is a lie," Morror hissed. "There is no loose rock."

"All right, have it your own way. I am going now, Morror. Good-by. I will crawl up to your ear in a little while and scare you." And he jumped up to the rock covering the hole and clung to it.

By and by the voice of Morror came. "Fleami!"

Fleami did not answer.

Morror called again. "Fleami! Answer me, little flea. I know you are there."

Still Fleami made no answer.

Morror was silent for a while. Then he said softly:

"Fleami, do you want to get out? I will let you out if you do. Do you want to get out, Fleami?"

Fleami knew that it was a trick to make him talk, and so he kept as quiet as he could.

"Fleami," said Morror, "I am afraid I was a little too hard on you. I am sorry for that, and I will let you go if you promise not to tell the King what I have done. Will you promise? Answer me, Fleami, will you promise?"

But of course Fleami did not say a word; and so pretty soon Morror began to talk to himself. "I wonder if he has really gone away. I thought that there was no loose rock or crack, but one is never sure. Perhaps I had better look in."

This sounded so funny that Fleami almost laughed aloud. But he kept quiet and clung to the rock.

In a little while the rock began to move. Slowly and quietly it shifted, then Morror's big paw crept in. "He is not here," the toad was saying. "I wonder if there really was a crack?"

There was now an opening wide enough for Fleami to crawl out. Slowly and cautiously he crawled to it, and then suddenly leaped into the open.

Morror clapped the rock on the hole with a gasp, but Fleami was already out. He turned a beautiful somersault, then, landing on Morror's ear, he croaked, "Thank you, Morror. That is the crack I meant."

Morror brushed Fleami off his ear and clutched at him. At this time Fleami caught sight of the toad soldiers the

King had sent. So he lured Morrор toward them and let them capture the monster. Then, going back to his pond, he told the tree frogs that Morrор would trouble them no more, and that they could stay in their pond and foretell rain for the benefit of all the insects.

THE RAIN FORECASTER

MORROR and his fellow conspirators met in a hidden cave to discuss the way to avenge the indignity they had suffered at the hands of Fleami. Morrор, as you will remember, was the largest creature in Toadland, having a mouth big enough to swallow a thousand mosquitoes at a single breath, and he had six hundred craggy warts on his slimy back. Fleami was a pygmy frog, possessing a bright-green body which was so small that he was often mistaken for a green fly with the wings and two of the legs missing.

The trouble between the giant and the pygmy had come as a result of the former's attempt to browbeat the latter. Fleami was not the one to affront others without a cause. Although he was an all-round champion, and could outjump and outcroak any other frog in existence, and could forecast rain five days ahead, he had never acted superior toward his brothers, much less picked quarrels with them. Therefore, if Morrор had not treated him as a slave, there would have been no conflict. That was why the King Toad had punished Morrор and his fellow conspirators for disturbing the peace, and sent Fleami away with an apology.

But, as it is the custom among the wicked to blame others for every misfortune, the toads placed all the responsibilities for their discomfiture on Fleami and were now plotting to capture him and torture him to their hearts' content.

At first this task of capturing the pygmy frog seemed hopeless; for, as I said before, Fleami was a champion high jumper, and could hop about more swiftly than a young flea. Of course the toads could swallow him. But, then, the swallowing was liable to do more damage to the toads than to Fleami, because the body of the pygmy frog was as hard as an oyster shell.

So that, in the beginning, the conspirators did not know what to do. But by and by they thought of the gluey paper which men used in catching flies, and decided that they would try it on Fleami.

So the toads stole a sheet of the paper and spread it in front of Fleami's house. Then, hiding themselves in a near-by bush, they waited for the tree frog to come.

In a little while Fleami came out. He had just finished a long nap and was half asleep. Naturally, he did not notice the trap until his feet were caught in the glue.

While the pygmy frog was fighting to loosen his feet, the toads hopped out of their hiding place and, after rolling him up in the gluey paper, carried him to their cave. There they dumped him on the floor and began to discuss what they should do with him.

This discussion was, of course, a part of the torture, and as it progressed, many horrible forms of torment were suggested. One said that the frog should be kept in the paper until he died of hunger, and another that he be placed on a sun-baked rock where he would die of thirst, while several expressed the desire to crush him under their mighty paws.

While this dreadful conference was going on, Fleami lay in the gluey paper, thinking. Presently he loosened the glue from around his mouth and laughed. "Poor, slow-witted toads!" he croaked. "They think they captured me. How funny!"

"Silence, you impudent little flea!" Morror hissed. "It is not for you to laugh. Do you know what we are going to do with you? We are going to crush you under our toes, or keep you in the paper until you die of hunger. One does not laugh when he is . . ."

"Yes, yes, I know that," Fleami answered. "That is why I am laughing, for how can you crush me, or starve me, when I am no longer here?"

"But you are," Morror retorted, "safely in the gluey paper."

"At present, yes," said Fleami. "But, do you know, my friends, I am a very wise frog and can easily get out of this place?"

"What!" Morror hissed. "You can get out of the paper?"

"Of course. It is perfectly easy. Shall I show you how?"

"No, no. It is impossible," said Morror. "Stop boasting and beg for mercy, or we shall kill you at once." And he put his paws heavily on the edges of the paper.

"Ha!" croaked Fleami. "I knew you would do that. But, Morror, I am not going to crawl out of the edge. I am going to get out from here." And he wriggled his body as if preparing to break through.

The toads watched the squirming lump in the paper for a while. Then they began to whisper to one another. "Does he really think that he can get out, or is he merely bluffing?"

"Of course it is a bluff, for how can he get out when he is rolled up like that?"

"You are mistaken, my friends," said Fleami. "Fleami never makes any boast he cannot make good. Now, watch. Here I go!" And he wriggled and twisted his body as hard as he could.

By this time the toads became very curious. They crowded around the paper and watched Fleami's attempt to free himself.

Fleami struggled for some time, then he stopped with a sigh. "I cannot do it, my friends," he said with tears in his voice. "This accursed rain forecaster interferes with my action."

"The accursed what?" Morror asked.

"The accursed rain forecaster," Fleami answered, "the thing that enables me to forecast rain."

"Hum!" said Morror. "What kind of a thing is it?"

"It is hard to describe," Fleami replied. "It is a tiny disk I carry in my throat. In dry weather it is small; but when rain is coming it swells up and fills my throat, so that every breath I send out turns into a croak. It is a wonderful machine, and it has done much toward making me popular among men and insects. But now it keeps me from getting out of this place. I am done, Mor-

ror. You may kill me or starve me." And he began to cry.

Morror thought for a while. He knew that Fleami was immensely popular among bees and butterflies, and that the popularity was due chiefly to his ability to forecast rain so far ahead. And as he reflected, a great idea came to him. "Perhaps," he thought, "I might take that forecaster from Fleami and, by using it, become as popular as he."

He cleared his throat and asked in a roundabout manner, "By the way, Fleami, about that rain forecaster—where did you find the one small enough to fit you? Or are all the forecasters of the same size?"

"They are of the same size," Fleami answered between sobs. "They are neither too large for me nor too small for you."

"Indeed?" said Morror. "What a queer thing! All one size, and yet they fit any throat?"

"Yes," Fleami asserted. "Once I loaned mine to a large bullfrog, and he could use it without any trouble."

"Hum!" Morror grunted as if deeply impressed. "What a wonderful thing! And so easy to use, too! You said you need but to keep it in your throat, and that it swells up when rain is coming and makes you croak, did you not?"

"Yes. That is all you need to do. Of course you cannot depend on all the forecasters, because some swell up when the air is dry, and some do not swell until rain begins to fall. Mine happens to be extremely good and it

enables me to forecast rain five days ahead. But now it makes my throat so big that I cannot get out. I—I—" And again he burst into tears.

That was all Morror wanted to know; and after complimenting himself on his ability to draw out the desired information from his victim, the giant toad asked: "Fleami, you said that you could get out if it were not for the forecaster. Is it a mere excuse, or do you really mean what you say?"

"No," Fleami croaked indignantly, "it is not an excuse. I really could get out if I had not this accursed thing in my throat."

"I do not believe it. I do not think you could get out."

"Yes, I could! I got out of a tighter place than this. But now rain is coming, and the forecaster is stretching the skin of my throat. If you do not believe me, feel my throat."

Morror felt the throat of Fleami. "Yes, yes," he said, "it is swelled up tight. No wonder that you cannot get out. But, still, I cannot believe you are able to get out," he continued. "I shall tell you what you might do. You might take that forecaster out of your throat, and then go."

"What!" Fleami croaked. "Take the forecaster out of my throat! How can I take it out when it is so big?"

"Oh, I do not know," Morror said. "Is it so hard to take out?"

"Of course. Otherwise, why should I give up trying to get out?"

"Well, well, how unfortunate! Perhaps I might lend you a hand."

"No, no!" Fleami croaked in horror. "I do not need your help. I know what you are trying to do. You are going to take the forecaster away from me and use it yourself."

That was, of course, what Morrор intended. He wanted to take the forecaster and then kill Fleami before he had a chance to escape. But he did not say so. Instead he said, "Why, Fleami, what is it you are saying? What would I do with your forecaster? I am a toad, not a frog. My duty is not to foretell rain, but to kill flies and mosquitoes. Come, let me pull it out of your throat so that you can make good your boast."

Still Fleami protested, saying that he would die rather than give up his forecaster.

"Come, come, Fleami," Morrор urged impatiently. "If you refuse my help and die in the paper, you will lose both your life and your forecaster, while, if you take my advice, you may save your life and the forecaster, even. Are you too foolish to understand that?"

His words seemed to make Fleami think. After a while he said that he would follow the suggestion. "Be sure to hold it firmly and pull hard," he directed, "because, if you miss it once, it will go way down into my stomach and never come out."

Morrор loosened the fold of the paper, and when Fleami squirmed up to an edge of it, he held him fast with one hand and pushed the fingers of his other hand

into the opening. Catching something that was flat and roundish, he jerked at it with all his might.

At that moment the body of Fleami suddenly swelled up, and then as suddenly thinned away. Morror knew afterward that that was the time when Fleami spread his legs, which he had kept doubled up on his stomach, and kicked himself ahead. He also realized later that what he was pulling at was not the forecaster, but the strong lower jaw of Fleami.

So, finally, the frog came out into the open, and, releasing his jaw with a mighty kick, hopped upon the ear of Morror. "You were right, Morror," he croaked. "I followed your advice, and now I can keep both my life and my forecaster."

HOPPIE'S FAMOUS KICK

HOPPIE was the worst four-flusher his frog town had ever known. Naturally, when he had been asked to take care of a tiny green frog who had come from a far-off town, he lost no time in showing off. He ushered the frog to a lonely place with rocks and shrubs, and began to talk about his wonderful adventures.

The green frog was a helpless sort of fellow, with a body scarcely larger than that of a mother fly, and legs that were thinner than Hoppie's paws, and he seemed to think that Hoppie was the bravest and strongest frog he had ever seen. This pleased Hoppie very much, and he continued spinning many wild yarns.

"Perhaps you have heard about the fight I had with a toad named Morror," he said. "He was a big fellow—bigger than any other toad in his tribe—and terribly strong. If you saw him, you would die of fright, because he is such a terrible creature to look at, having six hundred great lumps on his back and eyes that are each as big as your stomach."

"Oh-h-h!" the green frog shuddered. "And you fought him?"

"Yes. He didn't know who I was, and he tried to have a meal out of me. So I jumped up and kicked him on the nose."

"Did you? And what did he do?"

"What did he do!" he scoffed disdainfully. "Say, do

you know what becomes of a fellow when I kick him with these feet of mine? He flops down and passes out.”

“And so this Morror fell down and passed out?” the frog asked.

“Of course!” Hoppie answered. “It was a clean knock-out. There isn’t a toad that can stand my kick, you know. You may think that Fleami of your town is the greatest kicker, but I can kick a hundred times as hard as he. Fleami himself told me so.”

“Oh, so you know our Fleami?” the green frog asked, in surprise.

“Why, certainly! He once came to have a match with me.”

“Did he? And you beat him, I suppose.”

“Sure! It’s no trick to beat a weakling like him. I just cracked a rock with my toes and told him to do the same. That was enough.”

This last speech was interrupted by a terrible sound—the sound of great laughter that came like the roar of breakers.

The frogs jumped as if struck. “What is that?” they asked each other.

“Do not be frightened, brave Hoppie,” a voice spoke from the top of the rock near the frogs. “It is I—your friend, Morror.”

A huge, red-eyed, wide-mouthed warty toad clambered down and glared at the pair.

The frogs screamed and started to hop away.

"Come back, Hoppie!" Morror called. "I want to talk with you."

Then, because the frogs showed no sign of turning back, he cried: "Come back, I say, or I shall suck you back." He crouched down and rounded his lips.

"W-w-ait!" Hoppie begged. "I—I—I am coming."

"Come, then. How dare you disobey me?"

Fearfully Hoppie turned and started back toward Morror. The green frog jumped after him and fastened his paws around his leg. "Don't go near him!" he cried. "He will kill you. Come—come away!"

"Very well," Morror growled. "You needn't come, then. Don't ever come near me." Again he rounded his lips and started to suck.

In a moment a sort of whirlwind rose around Hoppie and blew him toward Morror. The green frog held him back as long as he could; and, then, when he was finally torn from his grasp, he dropped with a scream and fainted.

"How dare you come near me?" Morror demanded when Hoppie had come within his reach. "Didn't I tell you not to?"

"I—I—I couldn't help it," Hoppie answered in a trembling voice.

"Of course not," said Morror, with a mocking smile. "When I call you, you have to come whether you want to or not. By the way," he continued, "I hear that you had a fight with me. When was that?"

"Oh, that was a—a—ahem, that is—"

"Never mind ahem. Just tell me when it happened."

"It—it was j-j-just a story."

"Oh, I see. It was just one of your jokes, eh? Well, well! You are a funny fellow—always joking. Don't you think you are? Tell me, don't you think you are funny?"

"M-m-maybe."

"Yes, you are. You are a funny fellow. I am going to laugh at you. You'd better laugh, too. Come! Laugh! I want to see you laugh at yourself." He hugged his enormous stomach and howled.

Hoppie was in no mood for laughter, but at the same time he was too afraid not to laugh. He hugged his quivering stomach and puckered his face. "He, he, he!" he said.

Morrer laughed for a while. Then, suddenly stopping, he stared quizzically at Hoppie. "What makes you shake like that?" he asked, finally. "You aren't afraid of me, are you?"

"Y-y-yes, I am." Hoppie nodded several times. "I—I—"

"No, no; it's impossible." Morrer shook his head. "A brave frog like you—the fellow who can knock me down with a single kick."

"B-b-but . . ."

"Oh no, you can't fool me. I know you. You are a mighty brave little frog. That's why I am going to give you a little job."

"A—a—job?"

"Yes. A job that only a very brave frog can do."

"Wh-what kind of a . . .?"

"Oh, it's nothing very hard. You see, I ate some frogs the other day."

Hoppie gasped. "S-s-some what?"

"Frogs—tree frogs."

"Oh-h-h!" Hoppie was now shivering so hard that he could hardly stay on his feet.

"They were just about your size, though they might have been a trifle bigger and fatter."

"Ah-h-h."

"Anyhow, they were quite delicious, and I enjoyed them very much. Unfortunately, however, one of them had horny toes and these toes stuck in my throat. I tried many times to get them out, but I couldn't. They are still there and they make it impossible for me to take any food or drink. I haven't eaten for the past seven days, and now I am so hungry I could eat my own legs." And he stared hungrily at Hoppie.

Hoppie drew back and stood there, wondering how soon he would be eaten up.

"Yes," Morror went on. "These horny toes are giving me great trouble and I am very glad that you are going to take them out."

"What!" Hoppie cried. "I? I?"

"Yes, my little friend, you are going to get into my mouth and pull them out." And he opened his great mouth.

"N-n-no, I'm not! I'm not!"

"Yes, you are," Morror insisted, smiling gently as if he were offering him another helping of pie. "You are going to do it right now."

"No, I am not, I tell you! I don't want to get into your mouth."

"Ah, that's no argument," Morror retorted, waving his enormous paw, "because you will get into my mouth anyhow."

"But I thought you couldn't swallow anything."

"I can't swallow anything, but I can suck you into my mouth quite easily. Do you want me to show you?"

"No! No!"

"All right, then, I won't. But you are going to get in, anyway, and so you might as well take these toes out. Then perhaps I won't eat you."

Hoppie thought awhile. "Are you sure you won't eat me if I get those toes out?" he asked. "You said you were hungry enough to eat your own legs."

"Yes," Morror nodded, "I promise not to eat you if you take them out . . . that is, unless you slip down my throat yourself."

"Slip down myself?"

"Yes. One often does, you know. It's mighty slippery there." Of course, Morror really had no toes in his throat. He was merely playing with Hoppie, as a cat plays with a mouse before eating it. Having sensed this from Morror's last remark, Hoppie realized that now the only thing which could save him was speed.

So he put a paw over his brow with a show of thinking;

then he suddenly kicked the ground, jumping up and away from Morror.

"You little fool!" Morror snarled. He sucked him back and tried to clap his paw over him.

Hoppie dodged the blow and leaped again, landing on the far side of a rock near by.

Morror followed him and sucked at him from above the rock.

Hoppie crawled under the rock, and thence made for a bush.

While this hide and seek was in full swing, a strange thing happened. Something like a tiny green ball flew up from the ground and passed over Morror. Morror, who was then standing upright in an effort to catch Hoppie in mid-air, suddenly yelled and fell backward. Striking his head on a rock, he groaned, slid down, and curled his toes. When Hoppie crawled up to him after a long wait, there was no sign of life in the toad except the feeble quivering of his sides.

"Funny," Hoppie muttered. "Wonder what could have happened?"

"Where am I?" a voice spoke from behind.

Hoppie whirled with a gasp, and was relieved to see that it was nothing but the green frog coming to life.

The green frog raised himself, rubbed his eyes, and looked about. Catching sight of Morror, he cried: "Why, he is dead! Somebody killed him!"

"No, he just fainted," Hoppie answered.

Then, his four-flusher instinct suddenly returning to him, he added, "I—I kicked him."

"What! You—you kicked him?"

"Yes. I didn't kick him very hard, though. It was just a little swing on the point of his nose."

"Wonderful!" The green frog shook his head in awe. "Really wonderful!"

"No, no." Hoppie waved his paw deprecatingly. "There is nothing so wonderful about that . . . not, at least, for me. I do this kind of thing every once in a while. It was some fight, though," he added. "He charged on, his eyes bloodshot and his paws flying everywhere—and I——"

Suddenly he broke off, for at that moment he saw the toes of Morror wriggle. "Heavens!" Hoppie cried to himself. "He is coming to life. I must get away before he gets fully conscious. . . . Say," he said to the green frog, "let's start home. It's getting late."

"No, no!" the green frog protested. "You must finish your story first, because I . . ."

"I shall finish it as we go. Come, let's start." Again he looked at Morror, and was horrified to see that the toad was now twisting his paws. "Come, I say," he urged, "or do you want to stay here all alone?"

"I won't move until you finish your story," the frog persisted. "Tell me, what did you do after that?"

"All right. I shall leave you, then," Hoppie declared, crouching down to kick off.

"No, you won't!" The green frog caught him by the

leg. "You are going to stay right here and finish your story."

"Look here, you little fool!" Hoppie snarled. "Don't you know that Morror has just fainted and he may come to any minute?"

"That's all right," the green frog returned. "He won't bother us—not while you are here."

"Don't be sure about that. He won't touch me, of course. But he will certainly get after you."

"Yes, he might. But that's no reason you should run away. Now sit down and finish your story."

By that time Morror had raised himself and was shaking his head.

Hoppie was mad with terror. "Let go of my leg!" he roared. "Let go, you fool, or I'll kill you!" He tugged, twisted, and rolled over.

"I want to ask you a question," said the green frog. "Did you happen to see something fly over Morror before he dropped?"

"Shut up!" Hoppie snapped. "Take your paws off my leg or—"

"Answer my question," the green frog insisted, "and I will let you go. Did you see something fly over—?"

"Yes! Yes!" Hoppie yelled. "Now let go of me."

"That was I," said the green frog, puffing up his green body like a ball. "*I* am the one that kicked Morror."

Hoppie stared at the frog in surprise. "And who are you?" he demanded.

The green frog got up on his hind legs and made a

bow. "I am Fleami," he informed, "the weakling you beat in the kicking match. Now we shall go home."

When the frogs had hopped away, Morror put a finger on his brow and pondered awhile. "What I should like to know is," he muttered, "did I eat that four-flusher?"

STING ME!

FLEAMI was again telling about his great adventures. He was not the kind that talks about himself, being a modest tree frog; but at this time he was in the midst of a band of murderous toads, and boasting was the only thing that could save him from being eaten up. So he peaked his shoulders and spread his elbows, looking as ferocious as he could, and began to describe his battle with a monstrous stag beetle.

"He was a big fellow," he said; "twice as big as any of you. And he came swinging his seven-spiked pincers that were sharp enough to clip a granite—"

This thrilling tale was cut short by Morror, who stepped out from the rows of toads and bowed to Fleami. Morror was the leader of the toads, whose slimy back was covered with six hundred enormous lumps and whose horny head was packed with treacherous brains. "We hate to interrupt you, Fleami," he said, "but, if it's all the same to you, we should like to hear about the fight you had with the black hornets. That's one of the most interesting stories we have ever heard, and we should be much obliged if you would tell it again."

Fleami was puzzled, but, not suspecting any evil motive behind the request, he repeated the story, describing how big and powerful those hornets were, and what long and sharp stings they had, and yet, how, by using the trick he had learned from the magician of the hill, he had defeated them all.

"That's how I whipped the black hornets," he said. "Now let me go on with the story I began to tell—"

"No, you won't!" a voice roared from behind. "You aren't going to tell any more of those accursed lies."

Fleami whirled, and then cried in horror. For there he saw a swarm of huge black hornets, who were glaring at him, murder in their eyes.

While Fleami was staring, terror-stricken, the hornets moved forward and put him in their midst. "You impudent little flea," said one of them. "How dare you insult our race? Lie down and prepare to die, because we are going to sting you so full of holes that you will look like a torn spider web." And they all bared their stings—long, sharp stings, with a drop of deadly poison trembling at the base of every one.

Fleami's first impulse was to get down on his knees and beg for mercy. Later, however, remembering that such show of weakness would serve to bring down upon him the jeers and attack of the toads, he decided to take the punishment unflinchingly.

"All right," he said. "You can sting me all you like. I am ready." And because he was a brave creature, somehow he managed to smile. "Be careful that you don't break your precious stings," he added. "My skin is very tough."

When one goes to strike a fellow, and the fellow, instead of running away or fighting back, stretches his neck and tells one to hit him and hit him hard, one becomes suspicious. Naturally, Fleami's perfect willingness to

be stung made the hornets uneasy. They stared at him awhile, and then began to whisper among themselves. "You said you had learned a trick from the magician of the hill," they asked, finally. "What kind of a trick is that?"

This gave Fleami a spark of hope. "Perhaps," he thought, "I can scare them with this lie about the trick. Then maybe they won't dare to touch me."

He shook his head with a mysterious smile. "I am sorry, but I can't tell you," he answered. "The magician told me not to say anything about it until I get stung. You just sting me—as hard as you can—and you will find it out."

This made the hornets still more suspicious, and they again started to whisper among themselves.

Fleami smiled to himself. "Good!" he said to himself. "The scheme is working. A little more of this and they will let me go."

Raising his voice, he urged: "Come on! Why don't you sting me? I can't stay here all day. I am a busy frog."

Then, seeing the hornets make no move to punish him, he threw back his head and laughed. "My, you are a funny bunch! You are here to sting me, and I am here to be stung, and yet you stand there and do nothing but gossip. I have never heard the like of it."

He waited a little longer; and then, as the hornets were still whispering among themselves, he got up with a decisive nod. "That settles it," he declared. "I am not

going to wait any longer. I am going away to do my work." He started to beat a dignified retreat.

"Wait!" a hornet called. "We don't know what that trick is, but, as you say, we are here to sting you, and you are here to be stung. So we are going to sting you and see what happens." And a group of big ones crawled toward him.

Fleami gasped, swallowed, laughed. "Good!" he cried with bravado. "It's about time you did it. Now, be very, very careful, and don't blame me for what happens." He crouched down and waited.

The hornets formed a circle around Fleami, and worked their stings in and out in preparation to strike. Still hopeful, Fleami stared at those stings without any show of fear. "They are nice stings you have," he commented. "Let's see how deep they will go in. Be careful now. See that you don't hurt yourselves."

"Come on, everybody," said a hornet. "Don't be afraid of this little flea. He is just bluffing. Now, all together, one—two—three!"

"Why!" Fleami cried to himself, "they are going to sting me, after all!" He flattened down, bit his lips, and waited for the touch of the stings.

The stings, however, did not touch him; and as he still waited, the hornets began to ask one another, "Why don't you sting?" "Why don't YOU sting?"

Fleami secretly heaved a sigh of relief. "What are you doing?" he demanded with a show of irritation. "No

more fooling, now. How can I show my trick if you don't sting?"

"Aw, quit fussing!" said the hornets. "We'll sting you yet."

There was more whispering, and by and by a number of the hornets backed away, leaving three of the biggest ones behind.

"What's the matter?" Fleami asked. "You aren't weakening, are you?"

"Hold your tongue!" retorted one of the three hornets. "They aren't afraid of you. They are stepping out because they think we three are enough to do the work. Now get ready, because we are going to sting you hard."

"Oh, that's it, eh?" said Fleami. "Well, maybe you can. You may try, anyhow. There is no harm in trying."

Again he flattened down with every show of expecting to be stung. He, however, did not bite his lips or hold his breath, because he was now quite certain that they would not sting him. He lay there easily, as if he were drying his back in the sun.

"Now, all together," went the signal; "one—two—"

Fleami chuckled, thinking of the time he would talk about this incident to his friends. "Oh, how they will laugh!" he said to himself. "Just think of it! A lone tree frog bluffing a whole army of black hornets!"

This chuckle, however, didn't last very long, because the three hornets were quite jealous of their fame as fighters, and they really did sting him. The moment the signal

had gone off, Fleami felt the burning touch of the sting in three different places.

Fleami yelled and jumped up. He drew a clear arch over a tall sunflower near by, and then he came down, striking his back on a flat rock below. Ordinarily he would have landed on his feet, but this time the hornets clinging to his back had made him lose his balance.

Fleami lay there a few moments, bearing the pain of the stings.

By and by, he heard a smothered voice coming from under him. "Let me out!" it said. "Let me out!"

This voice was followed by another still more pitiful one: "Let me out, too. I am dying."

"Oh, my head!" moaned still another voice. "It's smashed to pieces!"

Fleami rolled over and looked in the direction of the voices. There he saw the writhing figures of the three hornets who had stung him. One was massaging his head, and one his back, while one was trying to straighten up his horribly bent sting. They were all in terrible pain and great tears rolled from their eyes.

In a moment, Fleami knew what had happened. These hornets had sent their stings into his back so deeply that when he had jumped up they had not been able to pull them out; and so, when he had come down on his back, they had been crushed under him.

That made Fleami forget the pain in his back. He jumped up on his hind legs and faced the rest of the hornets. "This is one of the tricks I learned from the

magician," he cried. "If you want to see another, just come and sting me."

There was great silence among the hornets. By and by one of them crawled out and spoke to Fleami. "You beat us, Fleami," he said. "And we are proud to be beaten by a fighter like you. If you will allow us to remove our wounded soldiers, we will go away and never trouble you again."

While some of the hornets were picking up the wounded ones, others grouped themselves into a circle and held a short conference. Then, all at once, they spread their wings and flew toward Morror and his friends. "Let's get after *them!*" they cried as they went. "They are the ones that set us on to this."

The last thing Fleami saw, as he took advantage of the skirmish and escaped from Toadland, was the figure of Morror, who was whirling like a crazy top, trying to brush the hornets from off his warty back.

THE POISON FROG

IT was some time after the band of seven giant toads had begun to terrorize the tribe of tree frogs. Fleami, the spokesman of the tribe, went to the cave of the toads to negotiate for peace.

Though Fleami was one of the smallest tree frogs you can imagine—so small, indeed, that one often took him for a green fly with the wings and two of the legs missing, he was not afraid of the toads; first, because he was a champion high jumper; and, second, because he was as hard in the body as an oyster shell, and no toad dared swallow him.

The toads were all in the cave and all seemed to be asleep. They sat in a circle, with their warty paws around their bulging stomachs, and their heads moved slowly up and down.

Fleami crawled into the cave, leaving the door ajar, so that he might have a clear passage should he need to run out; and going to Morror, the leader of the band, who had six hundred great lumps on his slimy back and a stomach large enough to hold a thousand mosquitoes, he wondered how he should wake him.

While he was so wondering, something struck him from behind. It was a terrific blow, and it stunned him for a moment.

When he came to, he found himself lying under what seemed to be an immense tree mushroom. "Now, I've

got you!" he heard a voice say. "You poor fool, why didn't you see if we were really asleep?"

In a moment Fleami knew what had happened. The toads had heard of his coming and had planned to capture him by a trick. They had pretended to be asleep in order to throw him off his guard; and when he had come near Morror, one of them had clapped his paw over him.

Now this was a most cowardly thing to do, and it made Fleami furious. I suppose he would have gnashed his teeth and torn his hair if he had had any teeth or hair. He ground his jaws and prayed that the hornets might come and sting the toads on their fat stomachs.

By and by a deep voice rumbled. It was the voice of Morror. "Are you sure," it was saying, "it is that accursed Fleami?"

"Certainly," answered Fleami's captor. "No other frog has a body as hard as this." And he ground his paw so hard on Fleami that Fleami cried in pain.

"Good!" said the voice of Morror. "Hold him tight. Don't let him escape. We shall now get the rest of the frogs."

"You need have no fear," said the captor. "No frog can escape me while I have my paw over him. Do you think they will come?"

"Of course. We shall tell them that unless they come with us we shall torture Fleami to death. That will make them come, because they think a great deal of this worthless flea."

Then there was the sound of several toads shuffling out of the cave.

Fleami was horrified. He put his mouth to the edge of the paw and cried, "Say, listen, I—I—"

But this speech was cut short by the paw that pressed the wind out of his lungs.

After a while, Fleami heard the hop, hop, hop of the toads coming back. "Here we are," said the voice of Morror. "Come in, little friends, Fleami is waiting for you."

This was followed by the noise of countless tiny feet scraping on the floor.

Fleami wanted to tell his friends not to come in, but the paw was pressing him so hard that he could not even whisper. And while he was struggling to fill his lungs with air, there came the sound of the door being shut.

"You can take your paw off that flea," came the voice of Morror. "I don't think he can escape now."

The paw went up, releasing Fleami. Weakly Fleami raised himself and looked about.

There were fifty or sixty frogs around him, all watching him with great anxiety. Seeing him get up, they crowded around him and told him how glad they were he was safe.

Fleami shook his head. "I am sorry you came," he said. "That was a trick to get you all."

"It seemed that way," said the frog nearest to Fleami, "but we could not stay away and have you tortured to death. Besides . . . besides . . ."

Suddenly he stopped, put a hand on his stomach, and made a wry face.

"What's the matter?" Fleami asked. "Are you sick?"

"No. Just a little stomach ache. I must have eaten something bad. Oh, oh!" He leaned forward and laid his head on Fleami's shoulder. Then, without moving his lips, he whispered a few words to Fleami.

"Poor fellow!" said Fleami, patting the frog on the back. "I wish I could help you."

At this time Morrор took his stand and spoke to the frogs.

"Listen, everybody," he said. "I understand that you want peace. Am I right?"

"Yes, yes," the frogs answered. "We want peace."

"Very well. We shall give you peace."

"Oh, will you? Thank you, Mr. Morrор. Thank you very much." The frogs bowed until their heads touched the floor.

"It is well you have come," said Morrор, winking at the other toads. "Come close, everybody, so that we can talk it over."

The frogs were afraid to go near him, but, as they had no excuse for staying away, they went a few hops nearer to Morrор.

"A little closer, friends," said Morrор, himself crawling toward the frogs. "A few hops more."

Fleami stood up and looked around. To his horror, he found himself and his friends surrounded by the toads, who were getting ready to swallow them.

Fleami hopped to the front and demanded, "What are you going to do?"

Morror twisted his mouth in a snicker. "Don't ask foolish questions, little flea," he replied. "You know what we are going to do. We are going to put you where you can have all the peace you want."

"You mean," Fleami asked fearfully, "you will put us into a hole?"

"No! We are going to put you into our stomachs."

"Oh," Fleami heaved a sigh as if greatly relieved. "That's all right, then. I was afraid you might do something else."

"It may be all right for you," said Morror, remembering how hard Fleami was. "But how about the others?"

"It will be all right for them, too," Fleami answered, "because many of them are . . ."

"Wurrrup, wurrrup," a voice came from among the frogs.

Fleami gasped and clapped a paw over his mouth.

"Many of them are what?" Morror demanded.

"I don't know. I forget."

"You lie! You do know. Now tell me, or I shall catch you and . . ." He raised his paw threateningly.

Fleami hopped aside. "I won't tell you. You must find it out by eating them."

"Eating them," Morror repeated. "Do you mean that they are hard?"

"No, they are quite tender. Only, only . . ."

“Wurrrup, wurrrup.” Again there was the cry of warning and again Fleami clapped his paw over his mouth.

“Only what?” Morror asked, more and more mystified.

Fleami shook his head. “No use, Morror,” he said. “You can’t make me tell you. You might as well eat us and take what’s coming to you.”

Morror scratched his head and thought awhile. “There is something very queer about this,” he said to the toad sitting at his right. “What do you suppose they are up to?”

“What are you doing, Morror?” Fleami taunted. “Why don’t you eat us? Are you afraid you might get poisoned?”

“Be careful, Fleami!” a frog cried. “He won’t get poisoned. We are not poison frogs.”

“Of course not,” Fleami rejoined. “That is why I said . . .”

“Ha, that’s it!” Morror cried. “You brought some poison frogs with you and are trying to kill us.”

“No, no, that is not true,” the frogs protested. “We are not poison frogs. We are as harmless as white mushrooms.”

“White mushrooms!” Morror hissed. “Don’t you know that some white mushrooms are terribly poisonous?”

“Maybe,” said the frogs, “but we are not. Come, now, eat us. We are all ready.”

“That settles it,” said Morror. “We won’t eat them.

We shall catch them and kill them. Come on, everybody, let's get after them."

"Wait, wait!" Fleami protested. "That's not fair. You said you would eat us, and we are prepared for a nice quiet death. Now you try to . . ."

"Shut up!" Morror cried, and his paw came whizzing down.

Fleami dodged the blow, hopped on to Morror's head, and shouted to the other frogs: "Quick! Up to the ceiling. This way!"

He whirled up and fastened himself to the ceiling. The other frogs followed the order, and soon the ceiling became covered with green figures.

"Oh, you will, will you?" Morror growled. "Come on, friends. Let's brush them down."

The toads flew up, swinging their huge paws; but they were too heavy to go up so high. They all dropped and bumped their necks on the floor.

"Come down, you cowards," Morror roared, "or we shall suck you down."

"We won't come down," Fleami retorted, "until you promise to eat us."

"Let's suck them down," said Morror. "But be sure that they don't get into our mouths."

The toads pointed their mouths toward the ceiling, and the sound of sucking filled the room.

"Cling tight, everybody!" Fleami cried. "And if you drop, be sure to drop on your hind legs, so that you can jump right up again."

The frogs clung to the ceiling as tightly as they could, but by and by some of them lost their hold and went down. "Here they come!" the toads cried, and leaped toward their victims.

But the frogs were dropping on their hind legs, as Fleami had told them to, so that they went up again before the toads could catch them.

This made the toads very angry. They stamped their feet and yelled at the frogs.

While they were so yelling, something dropped into Morror's mouth and stuck to his throat. Morror gasped and tried to spit it out, but the thing did not come out; instead, it went in, crawling from the throat down into the stomach.

"Good! good!" a frog cried. "He has done it. Morror has eaten a poison frog."

"Yes, I saw him do it," another frog said. "Poor Morror! He will be dead in two minutes."

Morror was horrified. "Help me, friends," he begged, sinking to the floor. "I must get the frog out or I shall die."

The toads gave up yelling at the frogs and began to work on Morror. They turned him upside down, pulled out his tongue, squeezed his stomach, and did many other things. But the frog would not come out; and by and by Morror began to feel sharp pain inside of him. "Oh! oh!" he groaned. "I am dying. Do something, friends. Don't let me die."

"Look, the poison has already begun to work!" said a frog. "He will be dead in a few minutes."

"Fine!" said another frog. "There will be one less enemy."

"Shall we tell him about that antidote?"

"Not yet. We don't want him to know it until it's too late for him to get it."

Morrer raised himself on an elbow. "What antidote do you mean?" he asked.

"Oh, it's the one for the poison frog," a frog answered. "You shall hear about it when time comes."

"Tell it now," Morrer begged, "or it will be too late."

"We want it to be too late," the frog replied. "What's the good of poisoning a fellow if we give him an antidote every time?"

"You!" Morrer wanted to jump up and catch the frog, but, feeling another pain in his stomach, he dropped on his back and groaned.

"Come now, little friend," he begged, a few moments later. "Tell me where that antidote is and I will let you go."

"Oh, no, I won't tell you! I would rather die with my friends than live alone. If you want to get that antidote, you must let all of us go."

"I won't," Morrer snapped back. "I will spare only the one that tells me about the . . . the . . . Ow . . . ow!" He put his paws around his stomach and began to roll on the floor.

"How is it, Morror?" the frog demanded. "Will you spare all of us—or do you want to suffer and die?"

"I—I will spare all of you," Morror finally promised. "Quick! tell us where the antidote is."

"Open the door, then," the frog ordered, "and we shall take you to the place."

So the door was opened, and the frogs, taking Morror to a deep, muddy pond, pointed at a grass that grew near the water. "There it is," they said. "Eat it and you will be well."

Quickly Morror bent down and tried to nip the grass.

At that time something dropped out of his mouth and sank into the water. He watched where it had sunk, wondering what it could have been.

A few moments later it came to the surface. "Come on in, Morror," it said. "It's about time you had your bath."

"Fleami!" Morror cried in surprise and anger. "It was you!"

"Yes," Fleami answered calmly. "I am the poison frog, because I have a deadly tongue."

THE LAST FIGHT

ONCE upon a time toads and frogs were enemies. Toads thought that there was nothing in heaven or earth that was as foolish as frogs. "They do nothing but croak and hop around in the grass," they used to say. "Why don't they sit still as we do, and catch flies and mosquitoes so that men can walk and play in peace?"

On the other hand, frogs thought that toads were about the laziest creatures they had ever seen. "Look at those lazy fools!" they would say. "They waddle around, dragging their fat stomachs in the dust, and hiss and sigh all day long. Why don't they move a little and study weather so that they can forecast rain?"

When two creatures despise each other like this, there is bound to be a fight. Toads and frogs fought every day, beating and kicking and biting each other irrespective of time or place.

This in itself was bad enough. But while they were so fighting they gave no end of trouble to their neighbors. They tore the nets of spiders, pulled off the whiskers of crickets, broke the hind legs of grasshoppers, crushed the hill homes of ants.

Naturally, the neighbors were very angry at them. One day they called a mass meeting, and, going to the homes of the fighting clans, they told them that unless they gave up their foolish quarrels, they would send for the hornets to come and drive them out.

This frightened both the toads and frogs. They held a hasty conference and discussed what they should do. Then they went to the neighbors and asked that they give them the chance to fight just once more. "We should like to send a champion from each side and let them settle the matter once and for all. If you will let us do this, we shall live in peace forever after."

This request was granted, and the toads and the frogs set about to select their champions.

Several days later the names of these champions were announced. The fighter to represent one side was the giant toad named Morror. He had six hundred great warts on his stout back and lungs that were strong enough to inhale a hundred mosquitoes with a single breath.

The warrior chosen to meet this monster was the pygmy frog named Fleami. He was the smallest frog one can imagine—so small, indeed, that he was often mistaken for a wingless green fly. But, as we know, his body was as hard as an oyster shell and he could outjump any other frog in his tribe.

Soon came the day of the fight. All the insects in the village stopped their work and crowded around the ring where the champions were to meet. On one side gathered the members of the toad clan. They were all fat and lazy, some hugging their bulging stomachs, and some making huge air-pouches in their throats. On the other side crowded the members of the frog clan. They were all small and lean and ungainly, but were full of self-importance and aggressiveness. Some of them sat upon toad-

stools, and some under the sunshade of lotus leaves, while the rest stood around with their paws on their hips.

The sides between the two fighting clans were filled with insects of all sizes and colors. There were grasshoppers standing on their long hind legs. There were snails with their horns hoisted high. There were the ladybugs with their wing cases polished like rubies. Cicadas, crickets, stag beetles, butterflies—they were all there, all on tiptoe, waiting for the appearance of the fighters.

At the appointed time the champions stepped into the ring and bowed to the spectators.

They drew cheers from the members of their clans. The toads threw back their heads and hissed like angry geese, while the frogs hopped about like fleas and croaked until it seemed as though their throats would burst. But all they got was a laugh from the rest of the spectators. They did not want to humiliate the fighters, but the idea of this smallest frog bucking the largest of the toads was too much for them. They clasped their sides or clung to each other and howled themselves hoarse.

Unflattered by the cheers of their clans, undaunted by the ridicule of other spectators, the fighters finished their bow and faced each other. Morror opened his great mouth and snarled: "Come on, you miserable little flea. I shall catch you under my paw and flatten you out like a hungry wood tick."

Fleami sniffed. "Come on, yourself, you lump of laziness. I will fly into your ear or nose and torture you until tears will drop from those sleepy eyes."

"You!"

"You!"

And the fight began.

Morrer raised his warty paw and clapped it over Fleami. "Now I've got you!" he growled. And he pressed the paw down with all his might.

"No, you didn't!" a voice spoke close to his ear. "I am here, getting ready to crawl into your ear."

Morrer gasped and quickly scratched his ear.

Fleami hopped down, and then sprang back on to Morrer's nose.

Morrer raised his paw and slapped his nose.

Fleami leaped off and laughed. "Stop hitting yourself, Morrer," he said. "You are fighting me, not yourself."

This made Morrer very angry. He snorted like an angry bull and tried to catch the frisky frog. Flop—flop—flop went his mighty paws, hitting the ground one jump after Fleami.

Fleami was having a wonderful time. He let the toad run after him, and, every now and then, flying up and perching on his nose or ear, made a face at the spectators.

The onlooking toads were terribly worried. They shook their heads and whispered to one another. One raised his fist and cried: "Stand still and fight, you coward. You are not running a race."

"Yes, yes!" jeered the frogs. "Stand still, Fleami. Don't be so hard on the poor baby."

So far the fight was in favor of Fleami. But by and by

the tables were turned. While he was dancing barely out of Morror's reach, Morror opened his enormous mouth and began to breathe in. S-s-s- he inhaled, making full use of his powerful lungs.

A mighty whirlwind rose behind Fleami, drawing him backward as though by strong cords.

Fleami gasped. He dug his toes in the ground and tried to leap forward. He leaped, but not forward. For the moment his feet were clear of the ground, Morror rounded his mouth like a megaphone and gave a mighty suck at his lean back. The tiny frog shot through the air, flinging his paws and legs wildly, and disappeared into the mouth of his enemy.

The toads jumped up and hissed in joy. The frogs slumped down with groans and stared at the stomach of Morror. The spectators cheered and started to go.

Here a strange thing happened. Instead of marching out of the ring in glory, Morror, the conqueror, put his paws upon his stomach and began to think. He meditated in this fashion for fully three minutes. Then suddenly he jumped up with a yell and started to stamp around. Back and forth, from side to side, he stamped, all the time hugging his stomach tightly. Finally he doubled up with a groan and big tears dropped from his eyes.

In a little while the frogs knew what the trouble was. "Look! Look!" they cried, pointing at Morror's stomach. "It's Fleami fighting inside of him. Good work, Fleami! Rave more, tear his stomach into pieces!"

Poor Morror! He should have discovered how hard Fleami was before swallowing him. Too late now. The frog was already inside of him, slamming himself against the walls of his stomach.

By and by a wise toad cried: "Bend lower, Morror, and cough hard. He will come out."

"Yes, yes," rejoined the other toads, "bend lower and cough hard!"

Morror bent lower, wriggled his belly, and coughed with all his might.

At first nothing but air came out of his throat. But, as he coughed on, a tiny green thing, curled up like a ball, dropped out and hit the ground.

Morror was much relieved. He straightened up, rubbed his stomach, and heaved a sigh.

The green thing that had come out of Morror's mouth lay quietly for a moment. Then a pair of paws and legs came out of it like the horns of a snail, and began to beat and kick the air.

The spectators were mystified. "What is he doing?" they asked one another.

"I think he imagines he is still in Morror's stomach," someone said, "and is trying to get out."

After so beating and kicking the air for a while, Fleami realized that he was lying on something hard and that his paws and legs touched nothing but the thing he was lying on. That made him open his eyes, and, lo! he was outside. Hurrah! He got up on his feet and stretched himself as hard as he could.

While he was doing that the bulky figure of Morror caught his eyes. He gasped and jumped away.

But Morror had already had enough of the fight, and so he did not pursue his enemy. Instead, he came to the center of the ring and declared that he would fight no more.

Fleami stopped, turned, and watched Morror for a few moments. Then he ran back to the side of his enemy and announced that he, too, would fight no more. After that the biggest toad and the smallest frog embraced each other and declared that fighting was the most foolish thing in the world, and that thereafter they would stand together and fight anyone who should start fighting.

THE END



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